

THE HISTORY OF **Dragonlance**[®] Saga

Being the Notes, Journals, & Memorabilia of Krynn



Edited by **MARGARET WEIS**
and **TRACY HICKMAN**



The History of Dragonlance

Being the Notes, Journals, and Memorabilia of Krynn

Edited by Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman

Compiled and Designed by Marlys Heeszel



THE HISTORY OF DRAGONLANCE

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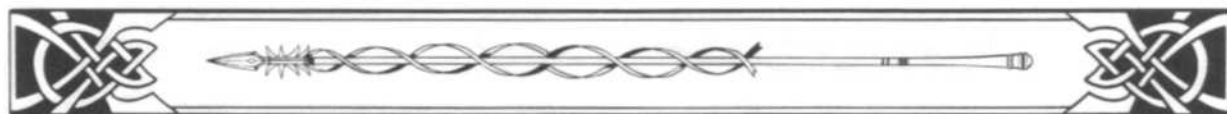
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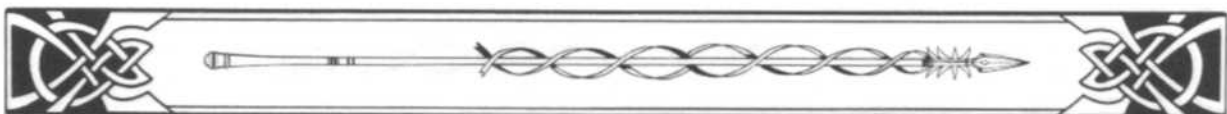
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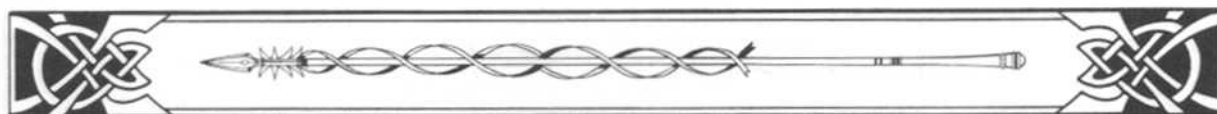
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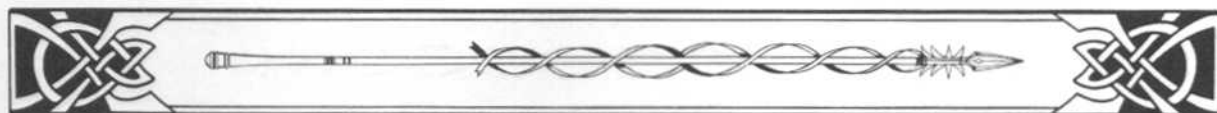
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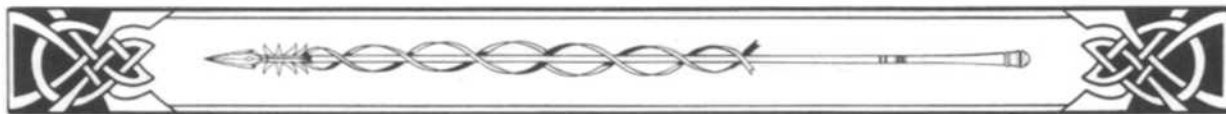
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It has been many years since I have traveled the lands of Ansalon. I've journeyed much during that time and visited other beautiful places. But it is good to return to Krynn, for this is where I have my beginnings, this is where I met the wonderful people who became my friends. I will be introducing you, fellow traveler, to these people in this book, as well as sharing with you many other interesting, fascinating, funny, provocative, delicious, musical, and always entertaining bits of information that can be found in the Great Library of Palanthas.

At this juncture, I would like to thank Astinus of Palanthas for graciously allowing us to spend time in his library, and Bertrem, Aesthetic, for his assistance in sorting through the myriad scrolls and books that record Krynn's history.

I was first introduced to Krynn by a group of fellow travelers, led by the redoubtable Tracy Hickman, who had visited before and had just returned from their journey. They told such marvelous tales that I longed to visit this realm and meet its people. These travelers, including Doug Niles, Jeff Grubb, Harold Johnson, and Michael Williams, had decided to share their adventures in Krynn by inviting other people to come journey through this land.

They devised a series of role-playing game modules that, using the player's imagination as the key, unlocks the door that leads to Ansalon. In doing research for this project, they traveled back and forth to Krynn on numerous occasions. It occurred to them that perhaps these adventures could be recorded in book form, and they proposed that I accompany them, in order to become more familiar with the land and its people.

I did so and immediately fell in love with Krynn. I met the Heroes of the Lance just prior to their setting out on their great adventure. I was also privileged to meet several of the artists, who traveled through Ansalon and painted the now-famous portraits of the heroes. I will be visiting with Larry Elmore, Keith Parkinson, Clyde Caldwell, and Jeff Easley in this volume as well.

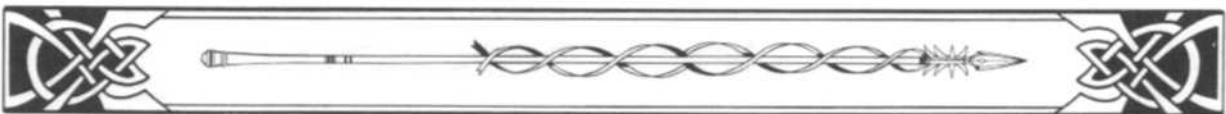
I ran also into Roger Moore, who had in tow a kender by the name of Tasslehoff Burrfoot, or perhaps the kender had Roger in tow. I was never quite certain.

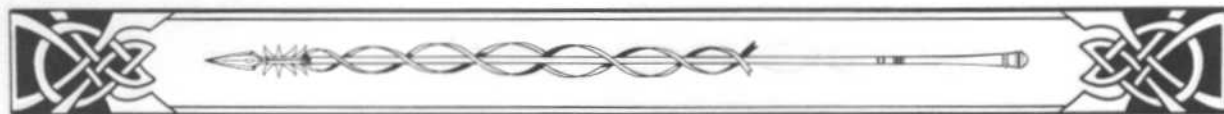
I spent many happy years in Krynn. I was pleased to be able to share the adventures of the heroes with you, fellow travelers, and look forward to telling you more stories in the future. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my intrepid guide, Jean Black, whose advice and wise counsel were extraordinarily beneficial to both Tracy and myself.

If you have your library card in hand, please prepare to accompany Bertrem and me into the Great Library of Palanthas.

Bertrem reminds you to keep silent. The Master is working.

Margaret Weis





Five Hymns

by Quivalen Soth, the Bard of Ansalon

Hymn to Water

Sing praise to the armies of water,
Sing praise to the dolphins
To the bright constellation
Of moonlight fractured on spindrift,
Sing praise to the hallowed
Current of blood.

We were born of the water,
Of the godhead glancing
On the face of the oceans like moonlight:
The youngest of elements,
Water, the blood of the gods,
Its first home the harbors
Of Ergoth and Balifor,
The splendid and featureless
Ice and marble
Of doomed and imperial Istar.
Water our source
And water our mother,
The warm, amniotic
swell of the tide,
The perpetual rain
Or seeming perpetual
As river and rivulet
Fade in the fire
Disappear in the stations of earth.

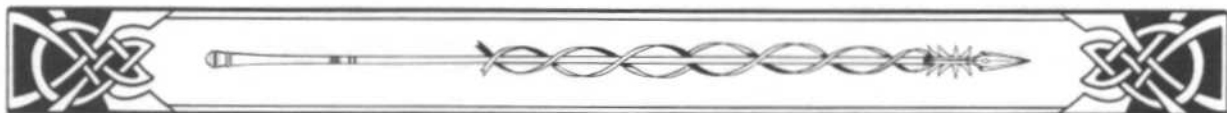
Praise to the element
Fluid and human,
To its sudden arisings
Cascadings and vanishings,
Praise above all
To the water's resurgence,
To the prospect of rain
In a desert country,
The faint and coppery
Hint of a river
In the cavern's depth
In the height of the mountains
The rumor of springs,

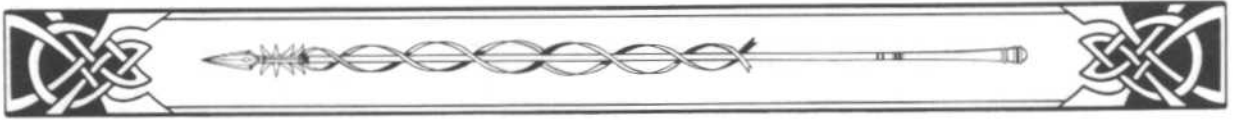
Oh as Istar falls
And Ergoth surrenders,
Palanthas and Balifor
Crumble and rise in our hands,
Praise to the water,
Exact and eternal,
The passion of cloud
And miraged horizons,
For the brief supple downpour
Of dolphin on dolphin,
The journey of humankind
Over the promise of seas.

Hymn to Fire

The constellations are a wheel of fire
Fire on fire interlinking
In all the great machineries of heaven,
The sun, the revolving moons,
And looking up into the work of hands,
Into the gods' contraption
Where night descends like clockwork, like the play
And tumult of devices,
Presents an intricate philosophy
A nature rapt by numbers.

Oh, do not tell us that the gods' first faces
Were simple and profound.
It is a fiction of the human year
A winter maintaining that
We strip away all glitter, all device
The intricate bells and whistles
And underneath them all, there lie the gods.
Divinity is intricate
The blue corona on the lip of flame
The jeweler's gear enmeshed
With instruments of joy, with steam and powder.





Love is an intricate engine,
Moving and unmoved, it scatters fire
Over mandala and zodiac
It scatters fire into the fallow night,

Each whistle and each bell, each clang and clatter
The heart's theology.
So let the hymn, like well-considered incense
Rise on a draft of air,
Let blueprint of the mechanism fade
And torque and velocity dwindle,

We are the ones who fashion these, our hands
Limned and mortal in days.
Let hymns ignite upon the edge of stars,
Let them wheel and intertwine,
Creating elaborate music in the sky,
High above Nevermind and our devices,
And then in fashioned daylight we will voyage
Past sun and stars into the source of light.

Hymn to Air

Imminent, invisible
region of light and wind,
defining the arc
of the hoopak's stone
with a rattle of head-high grain.
It goes where it will,
extending horizons
imagining water and earth and fire.
Contained in its cradling,
divine insufflation,
the wind makes everything possible.

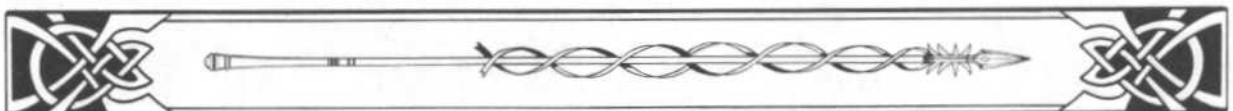
The childhood's element
sea of the barks

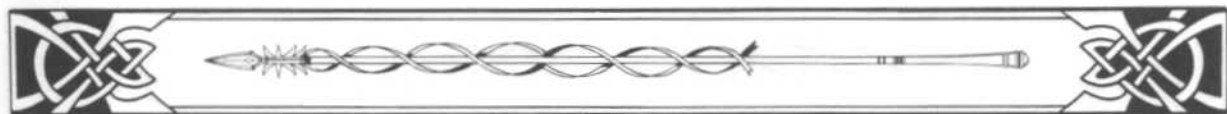
of leaf and dust mote
it goes where it will,
abides unexpectedly
and a dozen days pass
before we remember
how it bathes us, sustains us
and halfway forgotten
imagines the life of our days.

One time by the river
when the quietest element
moved on the waters
fragmenting reflection
and spangling the country with light,
and once on a road
where an afternoon storm
beckoned and threatened
the host of the air,
I have stood, oh my brothers,
and marveled the wind at its passing,
for each day is the wake of the wind,
the rich expectancy
of water and leaf,
the engendering flight
of seed and samara;
eight countries of peace
depart in a tumult of sails,
and the king of the wind
is the king of the innocent heart.

Hymn to Earth

Of rock and earth, of magma and cold shale
Build our belief. The hammer of the god
A truth forged in the absence of starlight.
And here amid the sediment of years
In darkness covering darkness, where the eye





Mines for the ore of mystery, the earth
Lies rich with promise and the fire of days.

Thorbardin and Thoradin, half an age
Has covered you, and half a dozen wars.
Here, in a thousand seasons,
Breath transforms to rock, to immaculate crystal,
Bone to onyx, the blood's loud current stilled
In the white stalactite. Here all things lie down
In darkness, and a vein of ore recalls
The lost light of our dreaming days.
And this is what we dream, what we remember:
In the black husks of carbon, we awake,
Devolving centuries, transforming fire,
The blue millennial diamond in our hearts.

So insubstantial are the bonds of earth
That stone is breath and pyrite is desire,
The light of gemstones is a rain of stars,
And what is gracious, what is misconstrued
As old illusion in the hooded night
Is the true vein that binds the bone to breathing,
Binds stone to the gods' air, and in the vein
The gold, glimpsed like a prophecy of light.

Hymn to Memory

If we forget you, Silvanost,
the fragmented vault
of birch and vallenwood
which is always diminishing,

If we forget
the sorcerous tower
the black harp of the river,

If we forget you, let memory lose
its imagined meaning
in a net of leaves,

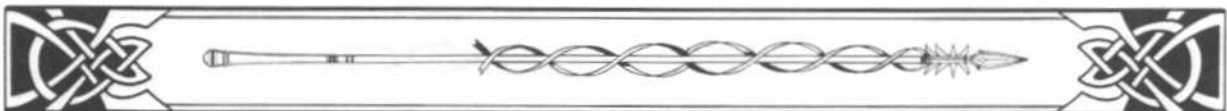
Let star and cenotaph
cool uninhabited
and a thousand years
unpeople the country of sleep.

Earth and water, fire and air
are the seeds of the world,
memory its soil
which we do not forget.

In the days of waiting,
when the seed in secret
takes root and grows,
the promise of light,
the nurture of air and water
find union in memory,
Silvanost, lest we forget.

And a thousand years
and the ruin of empires
are survived by the air
and the earth and the light
and water and memory,
memory binding together
the last breath of empire
with the advent of breath.

Oh, if we forget you
let mountain and river
let red moon and summer
still in our heartbeats,
let the dream of the elves
fragment and diminish,
and perpetual winter
nest in the skeletal trees.



The Adventurers' Guild

Douglas Niles
Michael Williams
Roger E. Moore
Jeff Grubb

Keith Parkinson
Clyde Caldwell
Jeff Easley
Larry Elmore





Douglas Niles

Very often, the adventurers will gather together and relate tales of those whom they have met while journeying on Krynn. On occasion, an exceptional storyteller will go so far as to recreate the very person of whom he speaks.

Doug Niles is extraordinarily adept at this art, particularly when it comes to one of his favorite subjects: Flint Fireforge. So adept is Doug that he has become intrinsically linked in the minds of many with the gruff, but loveable, old dwarf.

And thus it is no wonder that Doug's other persona, Foryth Teel, noted historian, had such an easy time gaining an interview with this renowned Hero of the Lance.

Interview with Flint

Inscribed in the Free City of Kalamian

Early Spring, 352 AC

To: His Excellency, Astinus

Lorekeeper

From: His Most Unworthy Servant

Foryth Teel, Historian

O Gracious and All-Seeing One,

It is with tremendous excitement that I impart this missive. Two short days ago I had the opportunity to meet with, and interview, one of the most distinguished heroes of the modern time! I speak of none other than the redoubtable hill dwarf, Flint Fireforge.

Our encounter occurred amid the celebratory frenzy that has seized this city since the raising of the siege and the arrival of the Golden General's army, a week or so prior to these discussions.

In fact, the good dwarf was somewhat busy at the time of our initial encounter—he burst into my humble suite at a city inn, demanding something about a vexsome doorknob. At first I assumed he was registering a complaint regarding the portal to his own nearby room, but as the good dwarf sputtered on about his companion, the famed kender Tasslehoff, I gathered that “doorknob” is simply one of the colorful warrior's endearing nicknames for his steadfast companion.

In any event, I made my introductions and suggested a subsequent meeting for research purposes. Flint was at first intractable regarding the notion of an interview, but I was at last able to discover a suitable means of persuasion. (I trust Your Excellency will not balk at the enclosed receipt for my expenses; the hill dwarf consumed nearly an entire keg of the persuasive medium!)

I enclose, herewith, the most substantive text of our conversation:

Q: How have you come to be regarded as one of the great heroes of the war?

FF: Hero? Me? Naw—that's the stuff of fairy tales and legends. Mostly what I tried to do was keep my skin intact—and wrapped around my flesh and bones. If I could help my friends on the way, I was proud to do so, and if my friends were doing things that might have helped all Ansalon, well that's a nice bit of benefit, too.

But did I set out to save the world? Not on your life! I guess you could say I was unlucky enough to be in the wrong place at the wrong time—and then lucky enough to stay alive to talk

about it.

Q: You were referring, earlier, to a kender companion known to many students of Krynn: Tasslehoff Burrfoot, of course. How did you and he come to be partners?

FF: Partners? Bite your tongue—he's my squire, when he can keep out of trouble long enough to get anything done! And that, I'll have you know, is a pretty rare circumstance! Why, when I found him this afternoon I had to lock him in his room just so I'd know where to get him tomorrow morning. I slammed the door and bolted shut the lock, then put the key right here in my pock—CONFOUND THAT DOOR-KNOB OF A KENDER! IT'S GONE!

(We adjourned briefly as Flint raced upstairs and ascertained that, indeed, Tasslehoff Burrfoot was no longer to be found at the inn. The dwarf was too tired—or thirsty—for an immediate pursuit, so he returned to the common room to continue the interview.)

Q: Er, not surprising, one might say—given the reputation of your, um, squire. But can you tell us how the two of you came to meet?

FF: One of the darkest nights of my life, I'll tell you—and I'm not talking about the weather! It was on the Solace Road, coming back from Haven I think. I was camping well off the trail, in a rocky grotto. As usual when there's goblins and the like about, I kept myself a small fire, no smoke; thought I was pretty well hid.

Well, so I'm curled in my bedroll, sleeping soundly. Next thing I know, the fire's so big I can see the light through my closed eyelids! I sit up, and there's this little guy with a long topknot sitting

by the biggest bonfire you could ever hope to see—in my fire ring, but with half a forest of dead wood piled on!

Then I smell bacon frying, and see that my pack has been opened—my own meat taken out, thrown in my own frying pan! Well, I reach for my axe naturally enough, when this little fellow gives me a smile and asks if I don't want to join him.

Join him! To eat my own food! And drink my own drink, too, I saw as he lifted my flask and took a sip. Well, the situation was ready for violence, I don't mind telling you . . . but it turns out that the bacon was done just the way I like it, and the kender didn't drink that much, by dwarven standards at any rate.

(Excellency, more about those dwarven standards later; suffice to say that it is a hill dwarf conversational custom for each participant to match, glass for glass, every other member. It should also be noted that Tanis Half-Elven tells quite a different story about how the dwarf and kender met, one not quite so complimentary to the good dwarf!)

Q: Would you care to relate the worst experience you have shared with Tasslehoff?

FF: That's not so easy. I guess it would be one of the times when I thought he'd gotten himself killed!

Q: There was more than one time?

FF: More than one hundred times by last count—and I stopped counting years ago! Still, the little runt is lucky, I'll grant him that.

Q: Are there common themes in these tales? Could you share, perhaps, just one of those stories with us?

FF: Common themes? Y'mean besides trouble, robbery, mayhem,





mischievous, burglary, taunts, insults, irresponsibility, misdemeanor, rascality, pickpocketing, and the like? (Pause, chuckle.)

The answer to your first question is yes, surprisingly enough. I guess you could say that curiosity runs through everything about that doorkno—about Tasslehoff. His nosiness would get us into trouble, and—truth to tell—more than once it got us out, as well.

One episode comes to mind. We were in the wilds, north of Solace and near the shore of the Newsea, on our way to a ferry crossing toward the north. Well, Tas and I were camped around my usual discreet fire, but I made the mistake of dozing off. Next thing I know, that

kender has flames shooting ten feet in the air! I didn't even think he could lift some of those logs, much less throw 'em on the fire!

Well, sure enough, a couple of goblins saw the fire and came to check us out. Tas heard 'em and woke me up, and I conked one of 'em pretty good. The other got away, I'm sorry to admit.

"Let's follow him!" Tas says, like it's a normal, sound suggestion.

I'd have nothing to do with such craziness, of course, but when that idiot kender went running off to the woods I had no choice but to follow.

We found their lair, and naturally Tas had to go in and see what he could see. When he didn't come out after an hour

or two, I went in after him. I found him in a big kettle, sitting in lukewarm water over a bed of coals, and surrounded not by a few goblins but by a clan of hobgoblins!

Well, once again he'd left me with no choice. I attacked, charging out there with full hill dwarf war cries and such—and I woulda taken 'em all, too, except for one sneaky little scut that came up on my blind side.

So there I am, tied in a bundle and dropped in the same kettle. But imagine those hobgoblins' excitement—by this time, Tas was gone! Seems that the distraction of my attack gave him the chance to get away. The water was getting a little too warm for comfort, and I was calling Tas just about every name I could think of, when he came waltzing in with this kendermaid he'd found tied up in a back room. He thought she was pretty sweet, but I'm glad he took the time to dump a bucket of water on the fire under my kettle.

To make a long story short, the confusion—and the steam that filled that whole cave—was enough for both of us to get out. We rescued Kayli—that was the kendermaid's name—as well. Tas had somehow found a pouch of steel coins in the lair, and when we got to Caergoth we lived it up for quite some time.

Fact is, I even gave some thought to settling down there, except after Tas got acquainted with the city guards we had to move on again—but that's a story for another time.

Still, I know he really liked that little kendermaid—and if it hadn't been for his curiosity, I reckon for certain that it would have been her in that kettle!

Q: Interesting. Have you, yourself, ever been in love? Or considered marriage?

FF: (Long pause) I . . . guess I'd rather not talk about that.

Q: Quite. Er, perhaps you'd care to discuss some of your reasons for leaving Hillhome and embarking upon a life of adventure?

FF: Adventure? Well, I never thought of it like that. I'd always been a little, well, different, I guess you could say. More curious about the outside world, perhaps, than some of my kinsmen. Or maybe I was too touchy for my neighbors—I know there're a few young bucks weren't too unhappy to see me start up the road toward Solace.

But I guess it comes back to curiosity, maybe a little boredom. I've never been real content to just sit somewhere and watch life go by. Nor did I think I could be happy, like so many other dwarves are, with a trade. Maybe I lack the skill to mine, or smith, or mold—I guess it's more likely that I lack the patience.

The thing is, I've made some great friends—people I never would have met if I stayed in Hillhome. Maybe it's bragging—I hope not—but I'd like to think that those friends have been glad of my company, too. We've walked a lot of roads together. . . .

(At this point I feared the old dwarf had fallen asleep—and for the first time I noticed that the years had indeed weighed heavily upon him. But, apparently, he was merely reminiscing; quickly he opened his gleaming eyes.)

FF: Anyways, I've always got those itchy feet. Matter of fact, it won't be long before we're off again. . . .





Excellency, I confess that our conversation continued for many more hours—at least, so I have heard from numerous reliable witnesses. My own notes, at this point, become rather indecipherable. (I refer Your Lordship to my previous remark regarding hill dwarf conversational customs.)

Too, I must apologize for the delay in scribing this missive. In all honesty, yesterday (the morning after the interview) I awakened with a most discomfiting sensation in head and belly. It required the better part of the day and night before I was able to touch quill to parchment without trembling as one with the ague.

In closing, I hope that such information as I have transcribed will prove of some usefulness and edification in your efforts to relate the true history of Krynn.

*With warmest regards and obedience,
Foryth Teel*

Postscript: It is sadly noted that, from Kalamán, Flint Fireforge embarked upon his last adventure. With his steadfast companions, including Tasslehoff Burrfoot, he journeyed into the mountains of Neraka, where at last the burden of age became too heavy for him to bear. His body lies there still, in a place called Godshome.

Michael Williams The Bard of Ansalon

During our journeys through Ansalon, Michael Williams was the one who kept us laughing. He was our bard, and the poetry he wrote is much renowned on Ansalon, where he has a

large following. From the fisherman's taverns on Northern Ergoth to the mighty castles of the Solamnic lords to the Pig and Whistle in Flotsam, you will hear the songs and poetry of this great bard. When he visited the Great Library, Astinus put several questions to the Bard. Perhaps you will be interested in the answers.

How did you become a bard?

In the southern, frigid climes from which I come, there are a series of initiations or preparations. The last is the most important: the postulant is submerged in an amber liquid distilled from grain, a sort of amniotic fluid that threatens to drown him, but at the same time contains the racial memory of his people encoded in its chemistry. The bard floats for a period of time—in the oldest legends, bards such as Arion Corvus and Quivalen Soth floated for an hour or more—all the while listening to the currents flowing about him. At some point he fills with listening, gasps, and the fluids rush into him. The rest depends on a strength that lies deeper than thought or feeling, as far as the bardic instructors can tell. The postulant either drowns, emerges damaged and forever altered, or (in isolated cases) comes out a bard. I was one of the fortunate ones.

Give our readers a brief description of yourself.

Tall, thin, dark-haired and green-eyed. A multicolored tattoo of Branchala's harp on my forehead. Quick-witted, well spoken, yet subject to protracted fits of dullness and abstraction in which these "virtues" are

replaced by a sullen silence. A bent toward melancholy and a tendency toward solitude.

What was your most difficult poem to write and why?

This may be a dull and disappointing answer, but it would have to be "Crysanias's Song." ("Water from dust, and dust rising out of the water.") You will find it in the second volume of the series known as Dragonlance Legends, *The War of the Twins*. It was pretty nigh impossible, at that time in my life, to get words around a celebratory poem. Those of you who have read "Kitiara, Farewell" which opens *Dragons of Spring Dawning*, may have some clue as to my state of mind.

Have you had any remarkable or curious adventures on the road that you would be interested in sharing with our readers?

Early in my bardic career, an illusionist adopted my physical appearance. She made herself indistinguishable from me, stealing songs, dining sumptuously in the manors of my patrons. The magic was so permeating, so thorough, that I began to believe my reflection, caught in the pooled waters of Thon-Thalas or in the mirrors of Palanthan mansions, was not my face, but the illusionist looking back at me.

Hence the tattoo. First it was the simple outline of a harp—the frame of the instrument, no more. But it served its purpose: the first two times I looked into a mirror, the face I saw had no tattoo. It faded rapidly, leaving the tattooed face—my true reflection—in its stead.

But the illusionist learned quickly. Over the years I have been forced to add strings of various color to the harp's design—a way of foiling the illusionist's attempt to recreate the tattoo, to deceive me again through my own reflection. At times, it becomes difficult to remember just what has been added to the design, and because of my adversary's skills, the mirror is no longer a reliable place to check. But memory is the blood of the poet, and I can usually remember clearly what colors and patterns the design has taken on.

Committing the design to memory has been a blessing. Now each tree in a copse of alder is distinct to me, singular among its brothers by the bend of a branch, the brown edge of a prematurely turning leaf. From trees in Silvanost to the cracks in the frost of Ice Wall, I have stored in my memory a map of Krynn by its particulars until, by following a path of linked yet broken images, I could guide you from one corner of Ansalon to another.

In these wanderings, a dark girl roamed the edge of my peripheral vision like an afterimage of light. Dark-haired and dark-eyed, she appeared only fleetingly, only fitfully, leaving in her wake the smell of roses and a deep, unsettled yearning. Elusive, she would dance at the farthest corner of my sight and, when I turned to face her, she would vanish entirely. Her mirage taunted me from Silvanost north through Solamnia and into Coastlund; once I decided it was the work of the illusionist or the woman herself, then concluded it was a mirage of my own imaginings.

It was neither. The Kagonesti girl





stared into my eyes and our gazes interwove in a high mountain pass of the Vingaards. Suddenly, my forehead glowed, and the painted harpstrings resounded with magical music and life—with a richness and depth of song I had not heard in my imaginings since the great submersion of my bardic initiation.

With song I summoned the elf-woman to me. She stands at the edge of the firelight as I tell this, her long dark hair dancing with reflected flame.

What are the ideal circumstances for a bard to set his quill to parchment or his fingers to the strings?

At gloaming, or the far early morning—those are the bard's times, when the world is in transition or otherwise . . . estranged. Sometimes I sit in the branches of an alder tree, tangled like a child's abandoned kite in the dark mesh of the wood. It is always a solitary pursuit, and yet the remembering mind fastens on images, dwells with the signs that somehow are the source of poetic creations: the gold harp or the blue phoenix, the brown feather of the natural world.

The dancing bride of the elves.

Hot tea. Fresh cold water. Both are the blood of waking. Drink either before singing—hot tea in hot weather, cold water in cold, so that the singer sinks into the climate.

And while the world is slightly tilted and hallucinatory—its fancy arising from the simple fact that the world is strange to begin with and needs only quietude to display that strangeness—the time of the bard arrives, and with discipline and imagining and (above all) joy, the bard creates his country.

Roger E. Moore

The first person among our group of adventurers to meet the famed kender, Tasslehoff Burrfoot, was Roger E. Moore, Creative Director at TSR and former editor of DRAGON® Magazine. We were not surprised to see the two get along, for both are equally boisterous, gregarious, fun-loving, adventure-some, outgoing, cheerful, and, well, let's be honest, at times just downright annoying.

Roger Moore was present the day Tasslehoff was being interviewed by one of Astinus's Aesthetics. Roger provides us with a copy of the interview and assures us that the Aesthetic's condition has now been upgraded and the poor man is resting comfortably.

Interview with the Kender

Tas: My name is Tasslehoff Burrfoot and—Hey, can I see that? Wow!—Oh, my gosh!

Int: Aaahh! [groans] Don't touch that again! Please! It's a magical recording device, and it's very sensitive.

Tas: Did that hurt when it—

Int: [gasps] No! No, I'm fine, really!

Tas: You're not burned or anything, are you? All those sparks and fire and—

Int: No! I'm fine! [groans, takes deep breath] Let's start over. [clears throat] Um, oh . . . Greetings. [short pause] I am Elrood of Gwynneth, Aesthetic from the Great Library of Palanthas—

Tas: You're bleeding a little bit, right th—

Int: I'm fine! Forget about it.

Tas: Well, if you're sure. I could go

find you a cleric. . . .

Int: No, thank you. To continue, Tasslehoff . . . a great many people in Palanthas have been asking questions about you and your incredible career, and I wanted to get the answers directly from the Hero of the Lance himself. The first question I have for you is about the woolly mammoth. We want to know about the woolly mammoth, the real story of how you met it, what it was like, and so on. Could you tell us about that, please?

Tas: The what?

Int: The woolly mammoth. Uh, there was a story about you, that you'd met a woolly mammoth, but—

Tas: Woolly mammoth? Is that like some kind of winter underwear?

Int: No! The mammoth! It is supposed to be a big thing with tusks and a long nose and big feet and hair all over and—

Tas: Oh, Squisher!

Int: What?

Tas: Squisher! You mean Squisher! Well, Squisher isn't his real name, but that's what I call him to protect his identity. We agreed that he should have a fake name—a pseudopod, I think he called it. Pseudognome. Pseudo . . . pseudo . . .

Int: The mammoth wanted a pseudonym?

Tas: Pseudonym! That was it. Yeah, he needed a pseudonym. If everyone knew his real name, they'd look for him and bother him with all sorts of questions. He didn't want that, so we thought of a pseudonym.

Int: But I don't see why he needed a . . . um . . . How did you talk to— Never mind. Tell me about Squisher.

Tas: Oh, Squisher's got a new home now. When I met him, he was in a zoo or jail or something that this evil wizard had built. He was real sad and lonely—Squisher was. It was awful. He and I got to talking about things and before I knew it, he was out of his cage and crashing around the wizard's lab. And, of course, the wizard would have to come home right then, so there was a lot of yelling and shouting and things catching fire, and Squisher and I just barely got out before the roof collapsed on top of the wizard. It was sure exciting. After that, we wandered around and explored things for a while. Then we went sailing, and after the sea monster chased us and our ship smashed onto the rocks, we swam to shore and Squisher found his new home. That would be about, oh, twenty years ago. No, maybe it was sixteen. Eighteen. Whatever. It was before the war.

Int: Uh . . . I'm having some trouble figuring all this out. This wizard kept, um, Squisher in a cage? Where did he find the woolly mammoth in the first place?

Tas: Well, Squisher was in this large pen with this big iron gate, so it was sort of like a cage but indoors in this ruined city full of broken jars and old coins and skeletons and jewelry and this huge chest that looked like it was full of rainbow stars but they turned out to be nothing but diamonds. The best part was the old tower where you could heave a brick off the roof and watch it drop six stories and hit the lake next to it. That was wonderful. I don't know where the wizard found Squisher 'cause I forgot to ask while





he was trying to throw fireballs at us. The wizard, I mean, not Squisher.

Int: Diamonds? You found a chest full of diamonds?

Tas: Yes. I took the whole load of diamonds up the tower stairs and threw them off the top, and they made a marvelous splash. I think the wizard was mad about that, too. I did find the greatest thing in the tower, though! [short pause] Here it is. This.

Int: That's . . . it's a feather.

Tas: It's from a goatsucker bird. Isn't it great?

Int: A feather from a goatsucker bird.

Tas: I think they're beautiful. See?

Int: But what about the diamonds?

Tas: The diamonds?

Int: The diamonds. The ones that—

Tas: Oh, they all sank.

Int: Right. Fine, then. Now, you said that you could talk with this woolly mammoth. How was that possible?

Tas: What do you mean? I just talked to him like—oh, that's right. He had a talking chain on. The wizard who captured him had this magic chain and he made Squisher wear it around his neck so that Squisher could talk even when Squisher couldn't normally do anything aside from make noises like UUUURRRREEEEEEUUUURRRR!!!

Oh—sorry. Here, let me help you up. . . . Anyway, when I left Squisher at Castle Dread, he still had the talking chain on and he was trying to yell at the sea monster not to eat me and not eat the ship I was on, but I don't think the sea monster was listening that much.

Int: The sea monster, Castle Dread—where are they? Are they near the ruined city with the diamonds?

Tas: No. Castle Dread is this huge

old castle that I think used to be elven in the really old days before the Cataclysm but was sort of messed up afterward and now it's on a cliff on this island and the stones are all falling out, and I do admit that it looks pretty dreadful now, especially the kitchen. The sea monster lives in the sea next to the castle. Squisher lives sort of in the castle but sort of out of it so he can eat leaves and stuff. Because of the mess in the kitchen.

Int: How did you know the place was called Castle Dread?

Tas: Oh. Here. See, here's the key to the main dungeon. Right there, it says "Castle Dread" right on the . . . Oops.

Int: What?

Tas: Um . . . well, I think only the Dark Master of Castle Dread is supposed to have this key, but he must have given it to me and forgotten it. That means the Dark Master must have still been locked in the dungeon when I left. Boy, I bet he was sure surprised. Here I am with the key and there he's been locked in that dungeon for the last twenty years and—

Int: Who is the Dark Master?

Tas: Oh, he lives in Castle Dread, or actually sort of under it now since he's probably still locked in the dungeon, but that shouldn't be a problem for him since he said he was dead and was beyond mortal needs, which I guess means things like snacks and burping and picking his nose. He didn't have any nose left, anyway; I think it fell off. He sure was ugly. He used to be a wizard of the Black Robes but said he turned himself into a leech, although I must say he didn't really look like a leech, slimy and black and rubbery. He looked more like he had been dead for a



long time and hadn't gotten any better. Before he accidentally got locked in his own dungeon, he told me that his time had come and soon the world would fear his power and bow down before him. And he wore the stinkiest old robes. Maybe it's for the best that he's still in the dungeon because Squisher has allergies and is sort of sensitive to stinky things. You should see his nose. Squisher's nose, I mean. The Dark Master's fell off.

Int: Eh . . . Perhaps we should pick another topic. You seem to have all sorts of things in that pouch of yours. What else is in there?

Tas: Okay, this is a key. And this is a key. These are keys, too.

Int: What do they go to?

Tas: This one has a sea gull on it, so it must be from that old red warehouse on the west docks where the ship crews go at night to put all the stuff they don't want the shore patrols to mark for import taxes. And this one is made out of a bone, but I don't think it was from anyone I knew personally. I think a minotaur gave it to me and then asked for it back, but I forgot I had it. Guess he was right. Minotaurs are very rude, you know. Well, he can't use the key anyway since he's still in jail and won't get out to unlock his treasure vault for another seventy-four years.

Int: Um, these look like—

Tas: Those are dragon scales. And



this is another key, and I think this one for the front door to the Inn of the Last Home. Ha, you know, I bet Caramon is wondering where—

Int: Dragon scales?

Tas: Yes. Those are the red and blue ones. I had a silver one, but I had to give it back. And this is a mygnyl chort. Here's another one.

Int: A what?

Tas: Oh, and those yellow raisin things you're holding. Those are dried bat's eyes. Oh, it's okay, all the pus leaked out long ago. They swell up and get all slimy and glow in the dark if you yell, "Alkinambra!" See? Say, are you okay? You don't look so—

Int: Fine! I'm fine. Just let me get my . . . okay, I'm okay now. Could you put those away?

Tas: Sure. Oh, and this rock here is a fertility symbol made by gully dwarves. Don't even ask. Here's another of those darn mygnyl chorts. And this is a steel coin from Garnet. It's a dwarven kingdom. Nice place, what I saw of it before they threw me out. They were the rudest lot. Called me all sorts of names. I wasn't sure about some of those names so I wrote them down to ask about them later. I've got the list here somewhere.

Int: This must be another goatsucker bird feather.

Tas: Yup. And this looks like a dust bunny but it's really a piece of candy with lint all over it. Here's another. Want one?

Int: Uh—no, thank you. Please.

Tas: And this is just a knife blade, and this is string, and this silver box is used to predict bad weather. The elves use it. I tried and tried to make it work, but it won't do a thing. I should take it

back to Silvamori and tell the court mage, Beriomar, that it's broken.

Int: The elves gave that to you? Beriomar the Arch-Wizard?

Tas: Well, he didn't really give it to me, exactly. I was looking through Beriomar's bedroom and found it. I was going to ask him about it, but the guards showed up and I never got around to it.

Int: Oh, my gods.

Tas: Those mygnyl chorts—here's two more. Three.

Int: Uh . . . I have just a couple more questions. There's a rumor going around Palanthas that Uncle Trapspringer, the kender hero spoken of in kender legends apparently since time began, never really existed.

Tas: [laughs] Oh, he'd love to hear that!

Int: Then he does exist?

Tas: Uncle Trapspringer? Yes. Sort of. I mean, it's more no than yes, I guess, so it's sort of yes and no, but yes all the same, with a little no in there. Let's say that it's no for now, and it might be yes later, but maybe it was yes yesterday—oh, that was funny. YES-terday. Get it?

Int: Huh? What?

Tas: Well, this is tough to explain, but I'll do my best. Uh, where was I?

Int: Uncle Trapspringer! You were—

Tas: You don't have to yell. It's rude. But yes, about Uncle Trapspringer. See, with kender, I don't know, maybe it's the same with you humans—though I asked Caramon about it once and he said kender were "abnormal," so I don't know—but with kender, we like to wander a lot, at least by your standards, you know, I mean by human standards, not by your standards personally, since you

might like to wander a lot, and I do admit that I've met some people who like to wan—

Int: I was asking about Uncle Trapspringer, not my—

Tas: Just a moment. You shouldn't interrupt, you know. It's rude. I never used to tell people they were rude but Caramon pointed out that I must become more aware of all the rude things I do like interrupt him and take his things when I'm only just looking at them.

Int: I don't think we need to go into that part. Let's stick to Uncle Trapspringer.

Tas: Oh! Of course. Even if you did interrupt. I was just saying that after Uncle Trapspringer had that little falling out with Reorx, things just weren't the same for him. Reorx didn't want to see Uncle Trapspringer around anymore, so he said, "I have no more time for you, so no time you shall have!" And that was how Uncle Trapspringer became the greatest of all wanderers, by wandering time with no time for himself since he always had to share someone else's time. See?

Int: No.

Tas: Oh, well, I said it was difficult to explain.

Int: But what was the problem with Reorx?

Tas: What? Oh, Reorx was in a bad mood and Uncle Tee—you can call him that if you have to say his name a lot so it doesn't get boring—Uncle Tee, he was yelled at by Reorx, who accused Uncle Tee of stealing the Graystone once, but it wasn't like that at all. He was just looking at it. So Uncle Tee was cursed to be stuck in the river of time, and he sort of wanders back and forth,

back and forth, checking out the world, only he can't show up anytime Reorx is in the neighborhood. So there is an Uncle Trapspringer, but he isn't around just now. Or maybe he is but isn't around here. We kender like our uncles, 'cause they take us places and tell us stories, so Uncle Trapspringer became our uncle, everyone's uncle. I guess I meant "every kender's" uncle, but I guess he could be your uncle, too, if you wanted.

Int: So, sometimes there's an Uncle Trapspringer, and sometimes there isn't, because he wanders around in time?

Tas: Yep.

Int: Have you ever met Uncle Trapspringer?

Tas: Well, I never have, but my mother's sister's best friend's second cousin from Goodlund did once. Mother's sister's second cousin's best friend, I mean. I think. And I met a kender once whose nephew's teacher's brother met him. So all this is true.

Int: Oh. Um, has Uncle Trapspringer been to the future? What's the future like?

Tas: The future . . . That's funny you should mention that since everyone says Uncle Trapspringer likes to tell stories but only about the past, before Reorx got a bee in his shorts about the Graystone being stolen, which it wasn't because it was with Uncle Trapspringer the whole time. The Graystone, I mean, not the bee or the shorts. Uncle Trapspringer had traveled the world several times before that point, and he had learned a lot about traps, but he doesn't say much about things after he met Reorx, who was really quite rude.





Sometimes he gets asked about the future, Uncle Tee does, and he says some really odd things, then talks about something else. I've been to the future, too, only it isn't the future anymore because of Raistlin changing it.

Int: Mm. Yes, well, I don't feel quite comfortable discussing that. What does Uncle Trapspringer say about the future he saw?

Tas: What does he say . . . ? Oh, if I remember the story right, he says, "I guess it could have been worse." Sort of funny when you think about it. It sounds like he's talking about the past, but he isn't, since he's already seen it and the future is his past, just like the past is. But then sometimes instead he says, "But this *is* the future," or "Sure beats me." I guess it depends on where in his life he is when he shows up, you know, like whether he's been jaunting around for only a little while or quite a lot by the time you happen across him. It's really very confusing.

Int: Yes. Yes, I guess it is. Uh, well, I do have one last question, which some in Palanthas were curious about. Are you married?

Tas: Married? No. Why? Are you proposing?

Int: Wha—no! No! That was just a question!

Tas: My, you are a grouch. That was a joke. Caramon's joke, really. He tells it sometimes when people ask him if he's married. You must not have gotten it.

Int: All right, it was a joke. Is there any reason why you aren't married?

Tas: No. Why? Are you proposing?

Int: No, I am NOT proposing! That's magic, I said! Don't touch it—

[INTERVIEW ENDS HERE ABRUPTLY]

Jeff Grubb

I am now privileged to speak of one of our more intrepid (some say "crazed") adventurers: Jeff Grubb. A civil engineer in a previous life, Jeff volunteered to go to Mount Nevermind in search of the truth to the various stories and legends regarding the Graygem. He traveled to Mt. Nevermind in company with a Knight of Solamnia, who, after recovering from burns suffered during the explosion, brought us this interview.

Jeff is reportedly staying on in Mt. Nevermind in hopes of procuring the rights to the Gnome Combination-Toaster-Oven-Tanning-Bed, still in committee.

Our hopes for his safe return dwindle daily.

I arrived at Mt. Nevermind wearing the robes of a scholar, seeking illumination on the legend of the Graygem, also called the Graystone of Gargath. Its tale has been told elsewhere (including *Leaves from the Inn of the Last Home*), but I had some questions, and that meant going to the primary source. That meant gnomes.

My guide met me outside the closed doors of the settlement. Those doors were huge bronze monstrosities that both defied and defined the nature of the gnomish inhabitants. A people half human size, gnomes have no need for such humongous doors, yet they build them. The Gates of the Abyss are only slightly less imposing than the main entrance to Mt. Nevermind.

When I arrived, my guide was shifting nervously from one foot to another. His name was Gusiantostheslightlyshorter-

thangusiantostheinventorofthesteam-drivenwaffleironbutnonethelesscreator ofalargenumberofalmostusefultems . . . Well, a gnomish name continues for quite some time, and is enough to cause any nongnome listening to its recitation to reach for the handiest bottle of ale. I called him Gus.

Gus brightened when he saw me, never a good sign. I greeted him and told my purpose here. He nodded. I nodded. He nodded again. I nodded again. He nodded. I . . . At length, somewhat dizzy, I said, "Shall we go on?"

Gus smiled, waiting for this moment. "I want to show you a new invention," he said brightly. "You are the first human to see this!"

I inwardly groaned at the prospect and prepared to flee in terror. "First humans" who watch gnomish inventions rarely live long enough to report on them. I had cross-checked with the extant texts to prepare myself for all manner of autognomes, steamcars, flingers, wingers, and all other none-such.

Gus turned to the closed doors and bellowed, "Mellon!"

Nothing happened. The doors remained closed.

Gus raised his hands and shouted the words again. Then he stomped up to the doors and kicked at them, shouting his strange *magic* word as he did so.

Finally, the lefthand door blew. Not blew open. It just . . . blew. It missed me by about a foot.

Gus looked at me, shrugged sheepishly, and motioned for me to follow.

Once clear of the debris around the door (through much scrunching and inhaling) I noticed that this entire end of

the Outer Hall was completely jammed by a clutter of gears, wheels, levers, pulleys, toggle switches, and other devices, all straining against each other, topped by a device that looked like a cross between a bass drum and an elephant's ear.

"New door-opener," explained Gus, then let loose a string of orders at a group of helpers, who immediately started to disassemble the monstrosity. "Needs some fine-tuning," he said with a weak smile.

I nodded and smiled. When dealing with gnomes, those are the first two of three rules of survival: nodding and smiling. The third is always knowing where the closest exit is.

The Outer Hall led to another set of doors, mercifully free of improvement, which opened into the throat of an extinct volcano, carved and mined for generations. The area was well lit by a thousand lamps, light-stones, small braziers, and devices that verged on neon. The walls were interrupted by all manner of verandas, balconies, and bridges, and bedecked with wide, openweave nets. These last I had been warned about—they were the receiving stations for the numerous gnomish flingers.

I turned to my compatriot and was asking about the nearest stairs when I noticed I was standing directly on a large yellow X painted on the floor. Fearing the worst, I took three good-sized steps backward. No sooner had I taken the third step when the ground beneath me erupted and I was flung bodily into the air.

The gnomes later said my screams were among the best they had heard in years.





Gus explained it to me as I was nursing my sprained ankle in the library. "You see, once we discovered that nongnomes knew about the flingers, we had to hide them, because humans for some reason kept asking us about the nearest stairs. So we marked the floor where we hid the flingers. Then the humans wouldn't go anywhere near the marks on the floor. So we marked the spots where the flingers *weren't* and then the humans would stand just where we wanted them to stand in order to get flung, which was *not* on the marked spots. It's really quite simple."

I muttered something both uncharitable and unprintable as I rubbed my swollen ankle. The nets, as I mentioned, were of an open weave, and one had caught me by said ankle. After the gnomes cut me down (without need for further invention), they helped me navigate to our present location, one of several libraries within Nevermind's fastness. The walls were filled, from floor to ceiling, with shelving holding ancient, mouldering texts, whose gilt letters had long since worn off from generations of handling. A small pile of volumes lay on Gus's desk.

I choked off my vituperative flow of words and merely said, "The Graygem?"

Gus nodded and waved at the library walls next to him. "These are name-books," he said. "The recordings of the gnomes. Each gnome's name is his history and his diary and his list of accomplishments and adventures. That way, we have everything in one place. It's so much more convenient."

I smiled and nodded and said, "And these are the ones that mention the

Graygem?" I pointed at the small pile.

Gus blinked at me, and I swore his blink sounded like shutters banging open and shut in a winter storm. "Oh, no, these are the ones that do *not* mention the Graygem. *These*"—he pointed at the rest of the room—"make mention of the Graygem."

I looked around, goggle-eyed. "All these?"

Gus nodded. I hobbled over and pulled one of the books from the shelf. The text looked like it was written with earthworms. I pulled a second, and found handwriting of sticklike slashes, and a third that was a code of interlocking circles.

I said, "They're all in different languages!"

Gus looked at the books, then said, "Not different languages. That would be silly. They're in different alphabets."

"Different alphabets." I repeated, stunned.

"It was all the rage for a hundred years or so," Gus went on. "The idea was that if we could communicate better, then we could build things faster. So many gnomes tried to create better alphabets. This one is *Stick-24*." He pointed at the vertical slashes. "And this one is *Freeform*, and this is *Doodles*," he said pointing to the earthworm and the circles. "There were others: *Ten-tones*, *Moonshad*, *Firespell*, *Azure Bubbles*. One of my favorites was *Menagerie*, created by my grandfather. He replaced the traditional phonetics with living creatures. So 'Gus' would be spelled Goat, Unicorn, Sea Serpent. In this way zoos could write their own poetry. Grandfather paid the ultimate price for his work, I'm afraid."

"What happened?"

"He was eaten by a schwa." Gus sighed. "However, most of us know the story of the Graygem, and we'll be happy to pass what we know along."

Sighing, I put the books back on the shelf and hunkered down for the long haul. Some of what follows is already known to most scholars, but I was here for the untold story. I quickly learned why most scholars don't tell it.

The Tinker Gnomes of Krynn are not native to Ansalon. Their original homeland was far to the east, and may have been sunk by the Cataclysm. Human tales speak of the ancestors of the gnomes as being men who learned to tinker, but gnomish tales say that humans are gnomes who forgot how to dream.

In this land far to the east, the men who became gnomes (or the gnomes who remained gnomes) venerated Reorx, and though they vexed their patron deity greatly, he chose to entrust them with a great treasure. This was the Graygem, a multifaceted chunk of rock invested with the power of neutral magic.

A short stop for terminology here. As far as I can tell, the early references to the Graygem speak of it as a gem. It became a stone—as in Graystone of Gargath—later, when it fell into the hands of a human barbarian prince.

Anyway, from all descriptions the Graygem was gray, varied as to size, and had facets. The number of facets is a source of hot debate, so that by general gnomish vote, it has been determined that the gem had either 512,578 facets, or it didn't.

The Graygem had a number of

ungemlike properties. First, it floated, like a toy balloon. Second, it seemed to have some sort of intelligence, since in the tales it always managed to stay ahead of the gnomes. However, it lacked godlike intelligence, since it did allow itself to get grabbed by the barbarian prince. Either that, or it was only fooling.

Now, the legends are a little vague on what the Graygem was for. Human tales say the stone was imbued with the neutral moon's energy in order to help fix neutrality as the dominant force in Krynn. The gnomish texts make no reference to this. Instead, Gus says that Reorx was going to give them the ultimate tinker's device: an item that powered all things, magical and mechanical, but did not need any stoking, winding, feeding, or recharging. In short, the Graygem was like that little battery that keeps going and going.

The tale of the first capture of the Graygem is stated elsewhere, and stated (in gnomish opinion) correctly. Reorx revealed a vision to one young gnome with a pure heart and full spirit. This little gnome created an invention, a ladder in two sections, that allowed him to ratchet himself to the stars. Or at least to the moon, where the gnome captured the Graygem in a magical net and brought it back to Krynn, where the other gnomes had built a great device.

Again, human texts state that this great device was tied into Reorx's plan to make neutrality supreme, but Gus and the various gnomish legends beg to differ. One tradition says the device would defeat all gnomish enemies, or at least make them sit still long enough for





the gnomes to introduce themselves. Gus states that Reorx's ultimate plan was to change all the humans into gnomes again. If this last were the case, then one can clearly see why it is never mentioned in human texts.

In the end, gnomish nature prevailed, for the brave and honest gnome neglected to secure the Graygem before opening the net, and the gem flew out and floated to the west. It floated toward Ansalon.

The gem probably did not float due west in a straight line, since the gnomes had sufficient time to build inventions to try to capture it initially, and to build ships and pursue it to Ansalon later on. The gem may have moved in a "Drunkard's Walk," always random, always weaving, always confounding the intentions and inventions of the gnomes, but generally heading westward. And the gem may have had some intelligence of its own, whether gifted by Reorx, Lunitari, or some darker force.

The gem floated off, and the gnomes followed. The gem floated across the sea, and the gnomes followed. The gem floated over eastern Ansalon, and the gnomes followed. Well, most of them anyway.

Now, there is an oddity in the traditional legends. The gem floated from east to west, the gnomes in hot pursuit. Yet, some of the gnomes abandoned the chase, and these gnomes eventually settled in Nevermind. Looking at the map, however, Nevermind is at the *western* edge of the preCataclysmic lands. If some gnomes abandoned the chase in *eastern* Ansalon, how did they end up in the west?

Gus provided a recap, for those who have not heard the tale. In Ansalon, there was a Zivilyn-worshipping barbarian prince named Gargath (Who was Gargath? *Why* was Gargath? The gnomes neither know nor care. Sigh. Another subject for research.) Whoever Gargath was, he *did* manage to do what no gnome could do: he snagged the Graygem (now the Graystone of his moniker). The exact method is unknown, but there is a story that Gargath, with his god's aid, found the net abandoned by the brave young gnome who had started all the trouble, and used it to snare the gem.

The human versions of the story tell of the gnomes' siege of Gargath's tower. These versions mention three colossal siege engines used to assail Gargath's fastness, each in turn failing. In the gnomish histories, there are a multitude of such failures: burrowers who went the wrong direction and struck underground lakes; flyers who overshot the walls; catapult projectiles that dented the walls; large drum sets that played bad gnomish music (known as TechGnome); and an attempt to gain entrance through construction of a giant wooden hamster (don't ask).

Finally the gnomes broke through Gargath's wall when their latest greatest siege engine fell forward as opposed to backward, crushing the gatehouse. (The gnomes place Gargath himself in among the flattened masonry.) The gnomes pressed forward, only to witness the Graystone of Gargath flare and bathe them in its magical aura, transforming all present. When the glow subsided, the gnomes who had pursued the gem out of greed had become dwarves,

and those who had pursued the gem out of curiosity became kender.

This gem-flaring goes uncommented on in human texts, and is treated as a natural effect of any god-inspired crystal. The gnomes (of course) offer a number of theories. According to one school of thought, Zivilyn caused the gem-flaring to occur as vengeance against the gnomes. According to another, Reorx did so in the hopes of converting his gnomes into some less dangerous commodity. A third posits that Lunitari herself, tired of having much of her energy tied up in such a device, took back the gem in a sudden fit of pique. This last is described by Gus as the “waiting for lunch” syndrome—the longer you make someone wait for lunch, the greater the explosion when you finally show up.

Regardless, both gnome and human legends concur that dwarves and kender are created from gnomish stock. It should be noted that the dwarves view this particular tale as apocryphal, a parable to indicate the danger of gnomish and kender tendencies. The kender, for their part, tend to pay the tale no mind at all, and often fall asleep before the talespinner gets to the part where the third siege engine collapses.

But the core question remains—if the Graygem traveled east to west, and the gnomes who stayed gnomes bailed out early, then why is the stronghold of gnomish activity on the western side of the continent instead of the eastern?

From my research, but especially from talking to Gus, I think I have an answer. Gnomes never truly abandon a course of action, but they often get dis-

tracted. They are diverted by some tangential problem, like getting a horse out of a tree, and put aside their original course of action. So the gnomes who stayed in eastern Ansalon, leaving the future dwarves and kender to go hurtling toward transformation at Gargath, were really just a little bit tardy. They were still pursuing the Graygem, but other things kept getting in the way.

So these eastern Ansalon gnomes—come-lately discovered the now-ruined castle of Gargath, and, lo and behold, a pack of covetous dwarves and curious kender. None could figure out where the Graygem had gone, so the surviving full-blooded gnomes pressed on westward. They finally ran out of room, on Sancrist, and they couldn’t prove or disprove reports of the Graygem crossing the ocean. Finding a nice neighborhood (a convenient, extinct volcano that no one was using) they set up shop, and that is how Mt. Nevermind was founded.

I voiced my theory about this to Gus.

He nodded and smiled. “That is a very gnomelike explanation.”

I was unsure how to take this, so I added, “It does make sense. The Graygem is still a part of your heritage, while it is ignored by the kender and the dwarves. And if the original ancestors of today’s gnomes were merely distracted, leaving only the insatiably curious and outright greedy for the gem-flaring, then that explains why gnomes seem a little scattershot and distracted by, uh, human standards. Those other overriding tendencies were all transformed.

“The only mystery left,” I said, “is





what happened to the Graygem itself. It vanishes from the tale after the transformation."

"Well," said Gus, pouring me some more tea, "it is very possible that the Graygem *did* continue westward across the sea, never to return."

"Uh-huh," I said. "You know, if Gargath did possess the magical net, that means the gnomes could have grabbed it when they crushed his tower. And if so, they would have been in a fine position to recapture the Graygem itself. Imagine what kind of energy source you'd have then. . . ."

Then I bellowed as Gus dropped the pot. He apologized profusely as he patted the hot tea off my sleeves with a fluffy towel. Since it had been a full two hours since something had gone wrong in the presence of a gnome, I said it was nothing, and counted my blessings.

The rest of the stay was pleasant, though Gus did act a bit spooky at times. When at last my time to depart came, he gave me some working notes on a few new projects, and bid me well. He walked me back to the still-smoldering doors and waved good-bye.

I walked away from Mt. Nevermind, thinking of what a great man once said, "If you want something broken, give it to a gnome." That includes history, I thought, and legend to boot.

That night, I had a strange dream.

I turned around and looked back at the great, extinct volcano. There was a thunderous boom, and the ground trembled beneath my feet. The self-opening doors fell off their hinges, and several legions of gnomes spilled out, followed by a billowing black cloud. Out of this sable fog floated something that looked

like a basketball-sized gray balloon, its facets glittering in the afternoon light. Many of the gnomes had butterfly nets and were trying to retrieve it, but it kept changing directions on them, heading in a generally westward direction.

I ran, as fast as my wounded ankle would carry me, to the *east*, without looking back over my shoulder.

Keith Parkinson

One artist who journeyed extensively in Krynn is Keith Parkinson. And if it can be said that Larry Elmore is known for his paintings of the heroes, it can also be said that Keith is known for his paintings of the villains! Needless to say, Keith's paintings took him into many dark and dangerous situations. Being adventurous by nature, he thoroughly enjoyed all of them. Here Keith describes how his favorite two pieces came to be painted.

I was coming back from visiting my cousins in Solamnia. Those law-abiding, tea-drinking knights are always enough to send me home grumpy, but on top of that, Old Man Winter had dumped about two and a half feet of the fluffy white stuff on me, and I hadn't even worn my good boots! As I slogged along, wondering what shade of blue my toes would be by the time I got home, I heard a racket a bit down a hill.

Whatever was making the noise didn't sound like it was out having a jolly romp in the snow. As a matter of fact, it sounded kinda like old Ferd when the Mulligan kid lit his hair on fire—all loud and screechy-like.

Now I never like to miss anything, so I went out of my way to snoop. Picture this. I creep down the hill, not making a sound! I come up to where I can get a real good look and what do you know! It's a bunch of them draconian "lizard boys" and it looks like they got themselves lost.

Ha! Can you imagine that? Those big bruisers. I always said they're as dumb as bricks, and there they were—armed to the teeth and clueless! I just about laughed out loud.

Now that wouldn't have been a good idea, 'cause they could have made me a whole lot more uncomfortable than I already was. So I eased on back the way I had come, then headed for home.

I thought on the way, I bet old Ferd would get a kick out of seein' those nasty lizards in a pickle like that. I ought to do a painting of it and show him. So that's exactly what I did.

Now, being an artist is a very important and dangerous job. Some people think you just sit around with brushes and an easel and a dumb-looking hat on your head. But it's a lot more than that. I am a professional, and I know what I'm doing, but sometimes even for us professionals, things can get a bit sticky, so pay attention, and you just might learn a thing or two.

I had been working real hard painting portraits (blech!), and I was ready to have some fun and paint some landscapes. I grabbed my port'o easel and headed out the door in search of panoramic backgrounds. Yep. I was on a mission. I wouldn't settle for anything less than really big, wide . . . stuff!

I walked up tiny hills and down very small dales, day and night, night and

day, for forty nights and forty days. I was on a mission, so I didn't want to stop until I found exactly the right scene. I was starting to get a bit hungry when I noticed a really big panoramic background just off to my left.

Things were working out just like I planned. I would eat lunch, then paint the mighty landscape. As I sat there and munched my grapes, I felt the brisk mountain air blowing. In all the land, for as far as I could see, I was the only one there. Peace, solitude, to be at one with the grandeur of nature—this was my quest. The silence . . .

Hey! Wait a minute! That sounds like . . . horses!

I looked up and Holy Mother of Mayhem here comes riding these fellows like none I'd ever seen before. First off, even from a distance with my trained eye, I could tell they were a bit on the skinny side. Up close now—Yikes! They were downright unhealthy-looking!

So there I sat, smack in the way of these evil customers, with my grapes and my paint. What did I do? Well, I figured if I was to hold perfectly still, maybe they wouldn't notice me and would ride on past.

It didn't work.

They came thundering up and stopped right in front of me. I tell you, it's a good thing I was wearing my old brown corduroys or it could have been a mite embarrassing. The big guy with the nifty helmet gets off his horse and walks up and says, "Hi, I am Lord Soth. Pleased to meet you."

Or words to that effect.

Turns out he and his boys—skeletal warriors, he called them—had gotten





some bad PR a while back and he was trying to set things right. I had the idea that a nice group picture that people could identify with might be the answer to his problems. I could paint it then and there, and we'd write some snappy little slogan about what nice guys death knights really are, print it up, pass it out, and *bing*—problem solved.

He said, "It's great to work with someone who knows what he's doing for a change."

Or words to that effect.

Anyway, I painted them just like they wanted. It took me two whole days to finish and those guys didn't move once. Not even to breathe. They were the best models I ever had.

When we were done, they gave me a lift back to the house and stayed for dinner. They don't eat much—I guess that's why they're so skinny. They left after dinner, saying something about liking to travel at night.

I never saw them again.

Clyde Caldwell

Clyde Caldwell is notable as the only living artist ever to have gone to the Abyss and come back to tell of it. Not only that, but to have gone there by invitation to paint the Queen of Darkness herself! Clyde is noted for his paintings of beautiful women. Here Clyde talks about his favorite painting, his most difficult subject, his easiest subject, and his most dangerous escapade.

My favorite painting is one I call "Dragons of Despair." I did not witness firsthand the events portrayed. Goldmoon

wrote a song about the encounter with Onyx, the black dragon, and sang it for me one night while we were seated around the campfire. I was so moved by the song that I created reference sketches of all the people involved as they sat there around me. Goldmoon, Tanis, Flint, and Caramon were all there, listening and adding to the tale when the song was finished. I later turned these studies into the finished painting.

A humorous side note is this. Goldmoon, being a chieftain's daughter, which made her like a queen to her people, was very modest. She never appeared bare-legged in public. But I have always maintained that the human body is beautiful, and I painted her without the usual buckskin breeches she wore. I was quite smitten with Goldmoon then and this was just a bit of artistic license. But the painting created quite a bit of controversy when it was first unveiled in Palanthas!

Knights are so prudish.

One of the easiest people for me to paint was Flint Fireforge. At first he grumbled and protested about having to sit for me, but that soon ended. I suspect he had a streak of vanity and secretly enjoyed the attention. Tasslehoff was the most difficult. His attention span is nonexistent, and he was forever being distracted by the least thing, jumping up and down, wanting to see the painting before I'd even started! He was never still long enough for me to make even a quick sketch!

The lot of the artist is not so much that of one who does great deeds, but of one who observes life and records it for others to see. This was the case with the painting "Dragons of Triumph."



I had gone in disguise to the Temple of Neraka to witness the final triumph of the Dragon Highlords. I little suspected that what I was about to witness was their end! I was there, hiding in the shadows, when Laurana, the Golden General—her clothing torn and tattered—stood in chains in silent defiance as the Dark Queen, Takhisis, loomed over her in the person of a five-headed dragon.

I was transfixed, my eyes riveted to the scene, paralyzed by fear and overcome by Laurana's beauty and courage.


I needed no sketches or studies to produce this painting. The image is burned into my memory and will forever haunt my dreams.

Jeff Easley

When the adventurers gather, you will find them laughing and talking boisterously, interrupting each other, arguing good-naturedly, teasing and playing jokes and tricks on one another. And while this raucous merriment proceeds, you might look over into a warm, comfortable corner of the room and see a bearded man seated there with a smile in his eyes, silent, watchful, enjoying the camaraderie, but saying very little for himself.

It would be well worth your while to take your mug of ale and go sit next to this artist and ask him to tell you his tales—if you can draw him out. Jeff





Easley is best known for having painted some of the most terrifying subjects on Krynn.

I was a little reluctant to respond to the request to relate a few memories of my years spent capturing the sights of Krynn on canvas. While there are many memories I cherish and never pass the chance to reflect upon, there are a like number that tend to keep me up well past my normal bedtime!

Don't ask details regarding the events that led me to be present in the domain of the fearsome Dragon Highlord Verminaard and his dread mount, the red dragon Ember. Suffice it to say, I was there, in Pax Tharkas, and the experience was burned into my mind's eye. I could easily re-create the scene later in great detail, by memory alone.

But even that pales in comparison to the circumstances surrounding the painting of my portrait of Raistlin Majere in his study.

I was a bit surprised to be summoned by Raistlin to do a portrait, but I learned later that his usual choice of artist—the half-elf, half-dwarf we knew as Elmo—was away searching for the “Field of the Litches” in the fabled southern regions known as “Kanto-kee.”

Knowing something of Raistlin's reputation, I wasn't surprised to find him a bit preoccupied. He rather grudgingly sat still for my preliminary sketches, although he appeared attentive to and occasionally distracted by every distant sound, however faint.

He made me nervous, and I, too, became aware of these sounds emanating from the depths of the castle. At the time, I convinced myself that the

sounds were merely the screech of ancient castle machinery being forced through its paces.

As the sounds grew in volume, Raistlin became increasingly agitated. Finally, he insisted that we cut the sitting short, using the excuse that he had things “to attend to.” Had I known what he meant, I would have exited on the fly.

But, assuming I was being put off on a whim (I had heard he was temperamental), I stated that I had a schedule to maintain and insisted that he remain.

His eyes seemed to flay me alive, but instead he told me calmly that if I wanted to I could accompany him “downstairs.” If I still thought his “chores” could be “delayed,” he would gladly proceed with his sitting. I foolishly agreed to follow him.

We began our descent of a spiral of a seemingly endless number of increasingly steep stone stairs. The total darkness did not hamper Raistlin in the least, and he was soon well ahead of me. I found my way much more slowly!

By the time I reached the bottom of the stairs, Raistlin had thrown the bolts on a massive iron door and swung it wide open. My eyes were then assaulted by the stabbing flare of a blue flame unlike any I've seen before or since. The flame sprang from a hole in the floor and in its glare, I could make out the stark figure of Raistlin himself, pausing to stare into the flame. My next perception was that the dark, wet walls of this dungeon were flowing like glistening lava away from the center of the room where Raistlin stood. And then I realized that they weren't walls.

I think my eyes registered the reality of the scene before my mind comprehended it, because the image captured in the "Lair of the Lost Ones" didn't gel in my mind until I was at least halfway back up the stairs leading to the main tower.

I fled the tower, leaving my supplies and brushes behind, and it was some time before I could close my eyes without reliving the moment when I had witnessed Raistlin's handiwork, and some years before I could bear to commit that memory to canvas.

Larry Elmore

The first of the artists to visit Krynn, Larry Elmore traveled that land extensively, for a while on his own time and with his own steel in his purse. He was the first to show us the faces of some of the heroes. The adventurer's group was so impressed by his work that they hired him on the spot and sent him back to Krynn as one of our "official" artists.

Larry was kind enough to give me his own impressions and stories of his travels, which are hereby faithfully recorded.

On First Meeting the Heroes: "The Campfire"

Sometimes I look back and wonder just how I survived those times. Verminaard and his troops were destroying everything. I was unfamiliar with this part of Krynn. My old worn map indicated a town or fortress known as Pax Tharkas. My plan was to travel near there and see if it was a safe place to hole up for a while.

I have always been lucky in my travels, and my luck held. I stumbled upon a group of refugees fleeing Pax Tharkas. They told me of great danger there.

I had left my home in Kentucky and been traveling for two years. I didn't have any particular destination; I was just seeing the world. Most people saw me for what I was—a harmless wanderer. My weapons were art and music. Whenever trouble arose, I would volunteer to entertain with a sweet tune or to draw a very flattering portrait of any thug or brigand who accosted me.

Since I was a child, the ability to catch the likeness of a person, with a bit of ink and a quill, came very easily to me. I taught myself to draw quickly, from memory, any person, after studying him or her only a short time. Painting also came naturally, and many times I did a small painting in exchange for a warm dry bed on a cold rainy night.

My musical ability was not as strong as my artistic, but it is a talent I enjoy. My grandfather taught me, when a child, to play songs on a little flute he had made himself. I still enjoy playing my flute, which I always carry with me. My wife, Betty, tells me to rely on my art, not my music, to save my skin, however!

I decided to travel a wide path around Pax Tharkas, keeping in the forest and well off the main trails and roads. It was getting late in the day, just approaching twilight, and I was looking for a place to camp. There was a chill in the air, but I did not dare risk building even a small fire. I was in constant fear that Verminaard and his cursed dragons





would fall upon me at any moment.

As darkness slowly crept though the forest, the familiar sounds of the night came to my ears as a comfort, because in these troubled times there had been many a dead silent night pass without the sound of a cricket, frog, or night bird. Then I heard it—the soft, mellow sound of a stringed instrument, perhaps a lute, played by someone with a master's touch. This sweet sound quickened my soul. I knew it could not be played by the clawed fingers of a draconian or the clumsy hand of a goblin. The maker of this music had to be someone with a heart of love, a soul that strove for goodness and purity. I left my cold and cheerless camp and followed that song.

After a short time, I saw a campfire straight ahead. The music had stopped, and I could hear voices. I approached quietly, listening to them talk, because, now that the music had ceased, I was once more apprehensive. I heard the words "brother" and "please" spoken by a man in a pleading tone. I drew nearer.

The closest person to me was a man clad in red robes and seated on a log. I had moved quite softly, but he heard me, nonetheless, and turned to look straight at me. I was never so shocked in my life. The pupils of his eyes were shaped like hour-glasses, his gaze penetrating and disturbing, as if he knew things about me that I didn't know myself. His skin was gold-tinted. I could tell by the bags and pouches he wore that he was a user of magic. He gazed at me, a slight smile playing about his lips. His gaze held mine for a long time. I couldn't look anywhere else. And then, suddenly, he released

me.

I could see the others, who were standing around the mage. One, who had been talking to the mage, was a tall warrior. There was a faint physical resemblance between the two, though the warrior was much broader and stronger. I knew then that the word "brother" had been spoken from the stronger man to the weaker.

Behind him, a group of people sat around a campfire. The man I later came to know as Tanis stood and, after a minute's careful inspection, evidently determined I was not a threat to them, for he welcomed me into their camp. It wasn't long before we were singing and trading stories. A kender named Tasslehoff talked almost nonstop. He told me about the group, how they came together, and about their adventures. He informed me that Verminaard and his dragon Ember were both dead and that Pax Tharkas was free. I was so impressed with these people that the very next day I began to paint the scene of that campfire setting where I'd first laid eyes on them.

When I told Tasslehoff I was going to do a painting of him and his friends, he grew very excited. He wanted me to get all the details right and was constantly pestering the rest of the group to come stand near me so that I could see how they looked and what they were wearing. The woman who had been playing the lute was named Goldmoon. She and her new husband, Riverwind, who were Plains people, were very gracious to me, but somewhat cool and distant. She did allow me to hold her staff, which was made of blue crystal and was truly marvelous. It eased away all my fear

and the pains of travel. They went to bed soon, keeping some distance from the others, so I'm not certain if I painted their clothes quite as they actually were.

I painted Tanis very accurately, I think, because I sat across from him and talked to him a great deal. Tanis said he had to keep an eye on Tasslehoff, to keep him out of trouble and keep the rest of the group from hanging him from a tree by his top-knot. (I could understand why when I found most of my paintbrushes were missing, and I discovered Tas trying to paint Caramon's nose blue while he slept.)

A lovely elf woman named Laurana came to sit beside Tanis while we talked. Although I had a chance to study her closely, I still couldn't capture her beauty, but I think I got her clothing perfectly. I took a good likeness of Tika, in her mismatched armor, and the mage's brother Caramon, as they sat by the fire, laughing at Tas and talking.

Flint was tired and retired early, so I didn't get a close look at him, but I remembered that he had a kind, weathered face. Raistlin, the mage, kept to himself, sitting in the shadows, studying his spellbook. When the fire reflected on his face, it seemed to glow. I got a good look at him, but he was still the hardest for me to paint. He carried a strange-looking staff. The top was a dragon's claw holding a crystal ball. Every time I looked at the staff, it seemed to change, and though I've painted it more than once, I've painted it differently from time to time.

Of all the heroes, Tasslehoff was the easiest for me to paint. From the first moment I met him, I really liked his energy and his curiosity. Perhaps it is that curiosity that we had in common. It drove me, back then. I wanted to see the world and all its secrets—just like Tas. That curiosity is still with me today. It drives me and motivates me. If I ever lose that, then I'm ready for the grave.

Wherever you are, Tas, may good luck be with you forever.

"The Death of Sturm"

During my travels back then, I caught up with the heroes several times after that. I've done several paintings depicting the heroes and their deeds. Sometimes I was there when the events took place. Other times I took notes in my journal and painted the art months or years later.

The time that was the most horrifying and emotional took place at the High Clerist's Tower. It's a long story about how I traveled there, and I won't go into that now, but I happened to arrive right before Highlord Kitiara's attack.

The weather was cold, the ground was covered with snow. Each morning, dawn would break cold and foggy. Doom was at hand. I knew that this time I'd followed this group of heroes too far and that we would all die here. The dragonarmies had us surrounded.

Doing small chores, such as taking food and drink to the watchful knights on duty, kept me busy and out of everyone's way. It was during one of these times that I got to talk to Sturm Brightblade. I'd noticed him at the campfire, but he'd said nothing to me. He was quiet and reclusive, his face





stern, his expression grim. But I thought he seemed forlorn and sad, too. That day, he was standing on the battlements. I was going to hand him his food and leave in silence as usual, when he stopped me and asked me what on Kryn timer I was doing in this place at this terrible time?

I told him that I felt it in my heart that this was the scene for a great painting, a grand masterpiece. He asked me what I was going to paint. I told him I would know the scene when I saw it. He put his hand on my shoulder, smiled, and said he wanted to see it when it was done. Then he walked on. I remembered thinking I could catch the way he walked on canvas: tall and straight but relaxed. He didn't seem as sad or stern to me now. I wasn't afraid of him anymore.

I talked to Laurana more, when we got a chance. We stood up on the wall, trying to keep out of the cold wind as much as possible. She looked tired and anxious, but then she wasn't getting much sleep and was skipping too many meals. Her beauty shone through this, however. When the sun hit her long blond hair blowing in the wind, she seemed to be radiant. She tried to smile, but at times her smile would fade, and she would look away from me. Her lips would tighten and wisps of her golden hair would blow across her face—a scene of strong, sad beauty. I could have fallen in love with her there.

On one gray morning, the dragon-army started to retreat. A cheer went up from some of the younger knights. This gave me hope, but I saw immediately that Sturm was still grave and worried-looking.

Then someone spotted them: three blue dragons with riders. One of them was the Dragon Highlord.

Sturm was up on the wall. Laurana was with him, tugging at him, urging him to seek cover.

Sturm refused.

She offered him a dragonlance, but he refused that, too, and placed his hand on an antique sword he wore.

Laurana turned from him and moved away. When she came down the stairs and into the courtyard, Flint met her. She took his hand, started to cry. Then she drew a deep breath and raised her head. She seemed to be taking command, not only of herself but of the desperate situation.

I could see Sturm's armor gleaming in the morning sun as he climbed the narrow stairs close to the central tower. Laurana turned with a look of resolve on her face and started walking forward. I went to meet her, but the look on her face stopped me. There was nothing to say to her or to anyone. Her golden hair and red crest in her helmet blew in the wind as she walked past me.

I'm not sure exactly what happened next. Sturm shot two arrows, striking two of the dragons but hurting neither. The third dragon, with the Highlord, began his attack. I remember hearing trumpets and a battle cry. The two—the knight and the Highlord, saluted each other. The dragon dipped low as it approached, disappearing behind the wall, then it reappeared, fast, as if it had been blasted over the wall. Sturm struck. The Highlord also struck—a death blow—through Sturm's breastplate. Sturm still stood.

First his sword fell. Then he crumbled to the snow.

I looked for a corner or a shadow to hide in. The next few moments were a living hell of horrible noise. I pressed my face into the snow and stones on which I cowered. Sturm was dead. I figured Laurana and Flint and Tas must be dead too. The thought came to me that I might be the only survivor and that frightened me even more. I heard shouts of men and the terrible screams of dying dragons. Slowly, those receded, and a silence that was even more frightening fell on the fortress. I sat up and looked around and I couldn't believe what I saw. Laurana emerged from the

tunnel into the courtyard. She looked up immediately to the wall and saw Sturm's armor shining in the sun. She started to run up the steps.

Laurana held Sturm's sword in her hand, but it was too heavy for her. She looked about for another weapon as the Dragon Highlord approached on the blue dragon. Behind me lay a lightweight footman's lance—a dragonlance. I grabbed it and handed it to her. She gave me a pain-filled smile, then she went to stand protectively over Sturm's body.

Of all the paintings that I have done over the years, "The Death of Sturm" is one of my favorites.





Lord Gunthar's Progress Report

From ≈ Lord Gunthar Eerin Terendell
née Khalmer Uth Wistan
First Son of Seven
Marshall of Sancrist
General of Ten Thousand
Grand Master of Knights

To ≈ Lord Michael Kettering Eleszar
née Krandal Sal Geoffrey
First Son of Three
Guardian of Southlund
Governor of Caergoth
Lord of Swords

My Dear Friend ‡

The days have been long and the golden orb of Solinari has waned thrice since last we toasted each other's health. Your patient counsel and youthful wisdom are sorely missed in these troublesome days. How passes time in your service to the Triune Gods? And how is your sweet Lisabet? Passing well and well-graced, I wager.

My beloved Ilsa and young Ella send their greetings and love as always. Of the boys, I have not visited Ibar or Rukas of late, what with their postings to Estwilde's borders. And you would, of course, know more of Merinn who, as Novice of Swords, has been billeted to your own Castle Dire. What news?

I trust your shield arm healed true. Such a deep gash to the shoulder blade will leave a fine scar, and will provide you a reliable gauge for the approach of rain and snow. I am sending you a reinforced epaulet that my man Wills commissioned especially for you. Ironfeld's craftsmanship should serve you well.

As I pledged, here is a report of the progress made thus far since the scattering of the Dark Queen's forces. Much has been accomplished, but there remains so much still to do, as well you know.

Since the end of the Campaign of the Lance, the peoples of Solamnia and the freelands have been quick to welcome us at the front gates, like some long-lost cousins, even though they surely barred those gates against our Order but a few years past. Mostly the common folk open their arms and homes to greet us as the defenders of the land. It is the rich and indolent, grown fat on wealth they purloined from the Order's former lands, who are not so quick to open the door.

To date, less than half of our ancestral holdings remain, many of those ravaged and bereft of wealth. Praise to Southland who never lost faith, and to Solanthas in Heartlund, who returned both our lands and those treasures and relics of our past that lay in the city's coffers. It is only through these and the largess of Northern Ergoth that we have the funds with which to rebuild. We are further blessed by the tithing the grateful fathers of Palanthas send south monthly.

Coastlund, Gaardlund, Elkhholm, and the Vingaard Plains have grudgingly welcomed our return. There are grateful patrons, many descendants of our Order's former tenants, who have opened both their hearts and purses to help us rebuild. Yet the peoples of Hinterlund deny our rightful claims.

Of the sixty-three families represented at the Second Council of Whitestone, only forty-two remain, Ethridge and Lessard falling during the Blue Lady's War. Eight of those are in disarray, the elder knights either dead or disabled, and only untried youth remain.

We proceed cautiously, trying not to permit past animosity to cloud our judgment or betray our Oath. Politics must be set aside if we are to rebuild to defend the freelands and guard the future against the mistakes of our past. We must never again be divided by petty bickering and narrow-mindedness, and ignore the spirit of our duty.

The rebuilding is slow. Skilled men-at-arms and veterans who have no other skill than warfare help fill our patchy ranks to guard against Estwilde and the traitorous Lemish.

We are cautiously accepting squires from good families and knights-apparent as candidates for our Order. Candidates are tasked to respond to the local pleas for help and justice against the wicked robber barons who seized upon the absence of the Knights to exploit the realm. Further, there remain many fell creatures, trapped within our fair nation following the campaign, that plague the countryside. We have had reports of dark dwarves, goblins, ogres, bandits, draconians, an errant wrym, and other ancient evils awakened during that black dawn.

In an effort to shepherd our Order's return to Solamnic society, we have formed a provisional merchants' and commons' council charged with easing interaction between the public needs and the Knighthood. And in lieu of our hereditary holdings, to recommend a fair and just method of taxation of counties to be placed in the hands of competent stewards, such as yourself. Current proposals would create a self-eliminating taxation over a five-year period, so that the public could be certain of justice for all, and not just to those who have money. I approach this all with much trepidation, for there is an extreme opportunity for the unscrupulous to exploit this arrangement to the detriment of our Order's Honor.

I remain anxious about the future of the Orders and our world. Perhaps such concerns will never end, and are but the wages of this office.

I was amused the other day when a young lad queried me about what I do now that the war has ended and I have retired. I was successful in not laughing out loud at his naiveté. Retired? The very thought that a Knight of Solamnia would have naught to do if there was no pressing war! There is always injustice and cruelty. Evil cannot be defeated, only driven back for a time, and thus the Knights must ever be vigilant.

My "retirement" has been anything but peaceful, as you well know. As Grand Marshall,





every petty complaint or imagined slight within the Orders is brought for my judgment. And, while we have set the Council within the grateful city of Solanthas, my family and ancestral home remain on Sancrist, and I miss them. Fortunately, Solanthas and the Council have been gracious in extending me leave as my estate's affairs demand. Further, loyal Zer'aarth, whom you know as Cymbal, continues to stand by me. There is no quicker way to travel than by dragon-back, and I would fain to share the joy with you if I did not know of your aversion to heights.

Wherever I am, I have fallen into a daily routine that I suspect is very similar to yours. I would find it greatly amusing to lead that thoughtless lad through this regimen.

Each morning I wake with the morning star while it is still dark, dress quickly, and walk to devotions. After preparing my mind and spirit for the challenges of the day, I run, perhaps five miles, and exercise with weighted sword and shield over a series of obstacles. Then, as twilight thins there is time for morning ablutions and a breakfast of fresh or dried fruit, cider, cheese, and bread before morning services.

Then I review the livestock and crucial operations of estate, or when I am at Council I review reports on the Order's crops, trade, and industries. By midmorning, I break from business affairs to see to the start of the training of troops for the day. Then, I greet guests with a brunch and review the agenda of duties for the day. Late morning, I excuse myself to see to the education of young knights in calligraphy, heraldry, the Oath and the Measure, duty, and courtly etiquette. By two hours past highsun, we break for a light repast, fresh bread, cheese, sausage, potatoes, meat pies, and if we are lucky, an onion or winter fruit.

Following midday repast, I must turn my attention to business decisions and hearing of pleas for knightly aid or requests for justice. After several long, grueling hours of counsel and listening, I usually renew my spirit with some small entertainment, a game of draughts or legion if at home, or something grander if entertaining. By late afternoon, I repair to the stables. After greeting all of my chargers, I pick a favorite and ride the grounds of the estate or out to a local project to review progress of each. Then back home before dusk for evening maneuvers and a mock skirmish, before returning to the stables, currying and feeding my steeds. Then it is time for evening devotions, and I always choose to further my own education by studying for two hours.

Dinner is usually several hours after dark, and is the largest meal of the day, often including roast meat and fish or fowl, yams, squash, beans, nutbreads, berries, and seeds, all washed down with wines, ales, and beers. Dinner is also the setting for the evening's business, reviewing problems and opportunities that arose during the day, or hearing newly arrived dispatches. Dinner lasts about two hours, after which I retire for a time of prayer, introspection, and planning for the new day. I prefer to end the evening with quiet time and a walk before retiring to sleep.

Whatever my schedule, I try to spend at least two days a week with family or friends, for a knight must ever be mindful of why we have pledged ourselves to our Oath.

Ah, but I long for the days before my "retirement" or this business of peacetime politics. Riding forth on a quest, or fighting to bring justice to the land. But even the adventures of my youth carried burdens and responsibilities.

Those days are ever engraved upon my mind. Adventures with Lord Curen Brightblade. We were two idealists holding out against the crumbling of the Knights' Honor and Glory. I often wonder if he was not the father of Sturm Brightblade. I certainly recognized my old friend's sad eyes and firm jawline in him. Did I ever tell you the sorrowful tale of the storming of Castle DiCaela and the fall of Brightblade? He was heartbroken when he chose to send his wife and son south, away from the battle.

There are many adventures to tell of during the Campaign of the Lance, since you fought valiantly in the south against Lemish, while I struggled with my command north in Vingaard. Did I ever tell you about the taunting battle of the kender versus that cowardly hobgoblin Lord Toede in Hylo? I learned later that Toede's defeat disgraced him and he was shipped off to Flotsam, where he thought himself safe from the insults of kender, only to discover that not only did Flotsam border on Goodlund, but that it was the original homeland of his nemesis, Kronin Thistleknot. I doubt not that Toede relived his defeat in Hylo several more times.

Then there was the invasion of Sanction, a distinctly distasteful, nasty business of infiltration of the dragonlords' stronghold, certainly not normal fare for a Knight of Solamnia. The scars of that adventure are still with me. But so are my blessings, most notably the friendship I forged with the copper dragon, Cymbal. I fear there is much I will never be able to share about that dark saga.

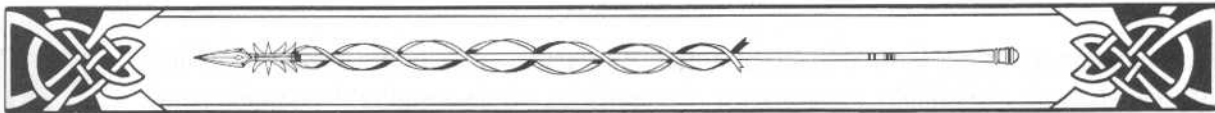
Now that the Dark Queen's power has been scattered, our adventures are of an entirely new nature. We reinforce against the forces of evil and build defenses against the future. Some of my greatest adventures outside the Council now are playing hide-and-seek with my godson in the castle gardens, or surviving one of the dreaded visits of gnomes and kender to Castle Wistan.

Not at all like my brief and unsuccessful trip to Mithas to negotiate a treaty with the minotaurs. And my shipwreck and brief sojourn on the island of Karthay. Most of my adventures have seemed mundane so far, but I fear that the future holds much more in store for me.

If Paladine, Mishakal, and the Dark Queen have returned, can the other gods be far behind? It is my fervent prayer to see my god, Kiri-Jolith, return to lead the Knights of Solamnia to drive the evil wyrms from the shores of Ansalon before I die. Ah, well, we must all have our dreams.

Peace to you and yours, my friend,
≈ Gunthar Uth Wistan





An Elven Haiku Portrait

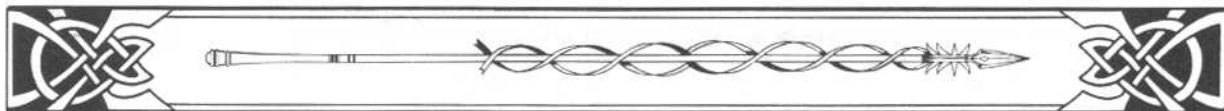
Hermit wizard's jest;
Sapphire, jade, brilliant eyes,
Wyrnkin's hope reborn

Arcane notes resound;
A bard's enchanting pipes,
Queen and brood obey.

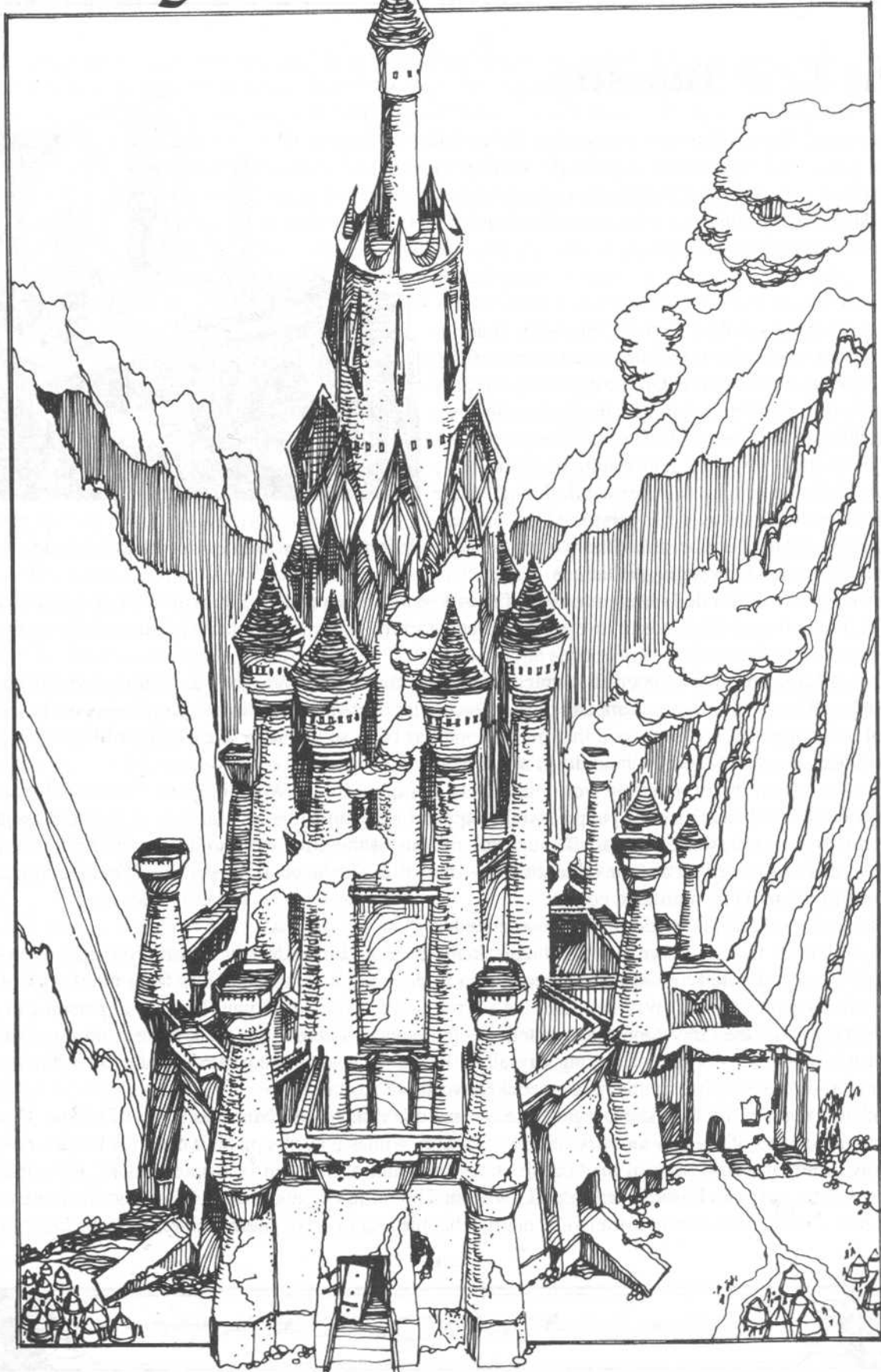
Windswept mountain vale;
Warrior's tomb and mournful prayer,
One more spirit lost.

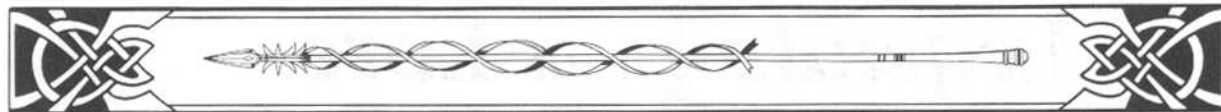
Autumn's forest trail;
Lurking foes, a sword forewarns,
Chilling calm, beware!

—Irfynmyer Glimmerleaf



Legends and Lore





The Lost Tapestry

Excerpted from Dissertations on the Nature of Lore, presented by Phlebius Gload, Master of Conjecture, to the court of His Opulence Hamblish IV (Hamblish the Inordinate), in the seventy-second season of the Dynasty of Xantach.

My Lord:

Among those scholars who sift the ashes of antiquity in search of living truth, there are two prevailing and opposing views of lore. On the one hand there are those skeptics who maintain that the ancient legends are nothing more than old fables—riddles propounded by dawdling rhymers and retold over the rumboards of the ages. On the other hand, though, there are those who puzzle over the persistence of particular tales. Many of these hold that there must be a foundation of fact within each fable, to sustain countless retellings down through generations.

To one ponderer, a tale is held true only if it can be verified verbatim, by witnesses of faultless credential. To another, the legends of lore are the tenets of truth—unfinished fabrics awaiting only the thread of corroborating fact.

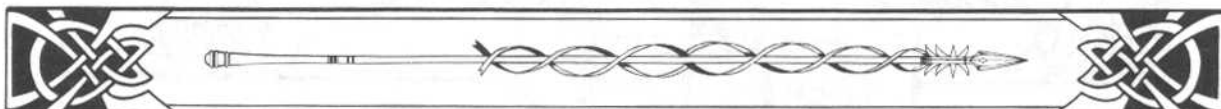
Many a tavern has been cheerfully wrecked, many a throat cut, and many a skull dented during the scholarly debates that often accompany chance encounters between the learned proponents of these two schools of thought. It has been said that more blood has been spilled over the validity of legend than in all the conflicts ever waged for land, love, and larceny.

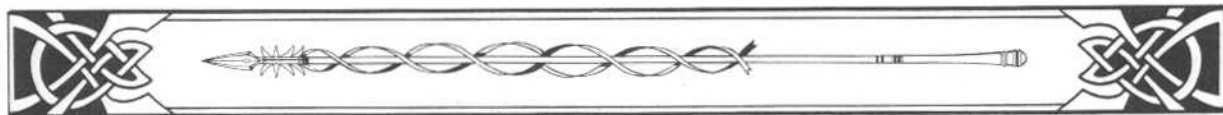
A traveler from Phyre, relaxing from his travels at a quiet inn in Wayfair, once commented that the world would be a better place if people would expend half as much energy dealing with the present as they waste trying to reshape the past. Thoughtful citizens of the town were so taken with his words that they had them inscribed on a stone tablet that was thereafter displayed at the gates of Wayfair, alongside the visiting Phyreman's mutilated corpse.

Thus, unfortunately, is wisdom often recognized.

Through it all, though, down through the bleak ages, certain bits of lore have persisted, neither proven nor disproven, but simply gliding from generation to generation as a bird glides from tree to tree. One such is the legend of the Graystone Gem, the source of all magic on Krynn. No mortal person can say with certainty that the Graystone ever existed. Even the ancient elves admit that there is no proof of the tale. But it is generally conceded among virtually all races—for lack of a better explanation of the insanities and absurdities of life in this magic-stricken world—that it did.

And surrounding the Graystone legend are myriad other such tales from the Age of Dreams. One of them is the legend of the lost tapestry of King Gargath. Runes and glyphs on a dozen solemn scrolls in as many different lands speak of the "fabric of destiny," and of the "king's woolen cloak." Enscribed in the ancient tongues of elvish Silvanost and dwarven Thoradin, of the ogres of Clom and the humans of Craglund . . . rendered even in primitive kenderish babble and in early gnomenculture . . . the tale is pon-





dered by sages and recounted by bards. They sing of the Graystone, and of how the gods gave the amulets Pathfinder and Spellbinder to King Gargath to help him trap and hold the stone. Gargath wrapped the stone in his cloak, they say, and carried it about his city for all to see before setting it atop a spire of stone where Pathfinder held it in thrall while Spellbinder absorbed and nullified its magical powers. Pilgrims came from every corner of the land to see the evil thing that King Gargath had defeated.

The Graystone was set free, legend has it, by an army of gnomes intent—as gnomes are inclined to be—on taking it apart to see what made it tick. Of Spellbinder and Pathfinder, nothing more is recorded. But the king's woolen robe was thereafter infested with strange, erratic magics. Legend holds that it was Barados the Decisive, the son and heir of Gargath, who gathered a council of mages and the world's finest weavers to dismantle the garment thread by thread and reweave it according to the arcane patterns of its magical powers.

The result was a rug . . . a small tapestry of unusual design that seemed to speak to all who looked upon it. No sound did it make, no word or whisper, yet each person who touched it swore that it had spoken, and what it told them was always the same.

I know the secret of all sorcery, it said. I know the minds of the moons. And on the day when the three moons are one, I shall divulge the secret to the one who holds me.

The secret of all sorcery! It was inevitable, of course, that many a villain schemed to acquire the tapestry before the next convergence of moons. The details of the fabric's disappearance have been forgotten, but legends tell how the legions of Barados stormed across the land in search of it, virtually wiping out the League of Thieves before concentrating their search on a hidden valley in the central Kharolis range. Less than once in each hundred years do the three moons converge to become one, and then only for a matter of minutes.

Barados failed in his quest, according to the lore. Though the approximate location of the stolen tapestry was known—information extracted from the agonies of dying thieves—still its exact hiding place eluded all search. So well hidden was the fabric that, though the moons approached imminent convergence, it simply was not to be found.

It was then that Barados decided that the secret of the tapestry must not stray. If he could not have it, then no one would.

His soldiers, it is said, exterminated every living creature within the valley. The soldiers, in turn, were methodically slaughtered by their commanders, who were then assassinated by the king's bodyguards.

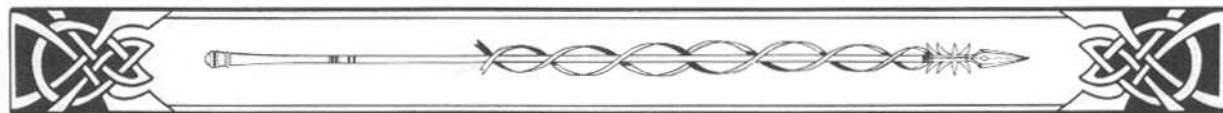
On the day before the night of convergence, legends say Barados honored his bodyguards with a great feast . . . and murdered them with poisoned wine.

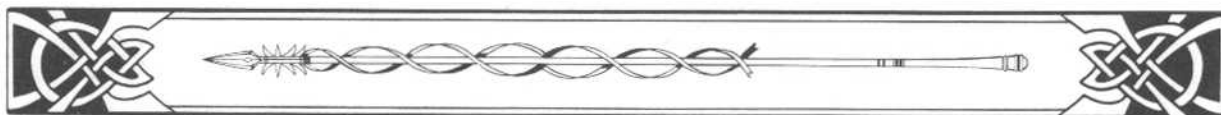
Little more is known of King Barados, except that he did not receive the gift of the tapestry. No one did.

Agnes have passed since those times, my lord, and there has been no further trace of the fabled tapestry of Gargath, with its legendary secret. Obscured by antiquity, it has remained hidden . . . if ever it existed at all.

Only now, with the discovery of ancient subterranean passages by miners of Outcrop—in the place thought to be the lost Valley of the Robe—has interest in the legend been revived. We believe that Barados did not know of these passages, and thus did not search them.

Your explorer, the Lord Daliath Vos, is presently in residence at Outcrop, where he has undertaken a search of the mines and the caverns beyond. He is accompanied by armstrongs, and by my own nephew Malus, whose sharp eyes and attention to detail are unparalleled. The gods be willing, my lord, we shall soon know whether Gargath's tapestry exists. If it does, I pledge that it will be in the hands of Your Eminence by the time the moons converge again.





*From the journal of Daliath Vos,
Lord High Explorer for the Court of Hamblish IV*

Day 19—

I have arrived at Outcrop, and found the village almost deserted. Of more than three hundred miners and their families who were in residence here at the last tally, most have fled. Only a dozen souls remain, and these few tell wild tales of unseen monsters and evil spirits below—things that allegedly invaded the mines after tunnelers broke through into a system of lime caverns deep beneath the mountainside.

They gibber about strange sounds in the shafts, about things moving just beyond the light of lanterns and the sounds of voices where no voices should be. They tell of tools disappearing from their racks, of mysteriously emptied food packs, and of furtive rodents in the shafts, fleeing in obvious terror from some unknown threat.

Still, my own armsmen and the “observer” Malus have descended into the mines and found nothing of note except an infestation of Aghar—those contemptible little creatures often called gully dwarves and found in various squalid locations in all climes.

Having no reliable human peasantry from which to draft laborers to aid in my search, I am forced to round up as many gully dwarves as my armsmen can catch and press them into service. They are incredibly stupid and unreliable, of course, but they can be induced—through judicious punishment and reward—to perform certain menial duties.

In the wilderness, decent help is hard to find.



Day 22—

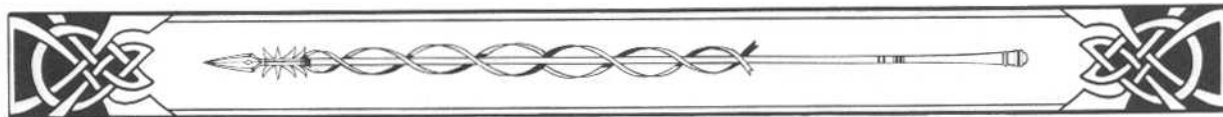
The search proceeds apace, despite our hardships. The caverns are far more extensive than I first believed. They seem to go on for miles in all directions. One great chamber, dimly lighted by phosphorescent fungus, shows signs of ancient habitation, though certainly not by anything human. Phlebius Gload's nephew Malus speaks of old legends that there once were dragons on Krynn. If this be so, then this might well have been a dragon lair in some former age. There is, of course, nothing here now.

So far, there is not the slightest trace of any tapestry, or even of any fault or crevice where such an object might be hidden. The only hopeful avenue is a screen of recent rockfall, beyond which may lie another cavern. I have ordered digging there. The gully dwarves seem fairly adept at digging, if one can keep their attention focused on the task at hand.

The observer Malus, surprisingly, has been of some use in this. He mingles with the gully dwarves, despite their verminous stench, and actually seems to communicate with them now and then.

The leader of the gully dwarves, if such a moronic race can be thought to have a leader, is a surly and sullen little individual whose name is Crump. He apparently considers himself a king, and has an irritating habit of issuing orders and decrees—commands that his “subjects” rarely follow. The other gully





dwarves refer to him as "Highbulp" when they refer to him at all. Usually, they simply ignore him.

Crump is entirely useless as a worker. He is, in fact, a terrible nuisance. His only talent seems to consist of stumping about, wrapped in a soiled and ragged old cloak, with a crown of rats' teeth aslant upon his unwashed head, grumbling and getting in everyone's way. He demands constant attention, and is forever interrupting my diggers. Only when they have stopped whatever they are doing and gathered around him is he satisfied, then he simply sits down, wraps himself in his noisome cloak, and goes to sleep.

I have decided to isolate Crump from the rest, in the hope that they might work better without his constant distractions.

Day 25—

The separation of the Highbulp from my gang of gully dwarves proved to be a disaster. Within hours of his removal to a distant cell, the rest of the gully dwarves seemed to have lost all sense of purpose. The digging came to a virtual halt, and even the whips and goads of my armymen failed to get it started again. The gully dwarves simply did not respond. The idiotic little creatures just wandered around, drifting off in all directions despite every effort to keep them working. By the end of the first day, more than half of them were missing, and we had no choice but to waste a full day hunting them down and rounding them up again.

Oh, for a few dozen good, malleable human slaves! I would even settle for true dwarves right now, despite the dangers of driving those fierce and intractable people. But no such are available to me here . . . only gully dwarves.

It seems I am forced to tolerate the presence of the Highbulp Crump, if this quest is to be completed.

Day 28—

Another delay! We were nearly through the rockfall, and the digging seemed to be going well. The gully dwarves actually seemed to be showing some enthusiasm for their work. Then my overseers realized that we were going the wrong way.

It seems the gully dwarves had come across a vein of pyrite and had veered off course to follow it. Two days of digging wasted! I have pledged to all the gods that, if only I can complete this assignment and return to civilization, I will henceforth pursue some other line of work.

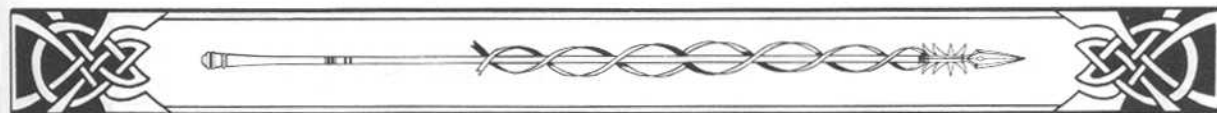
Day 30—

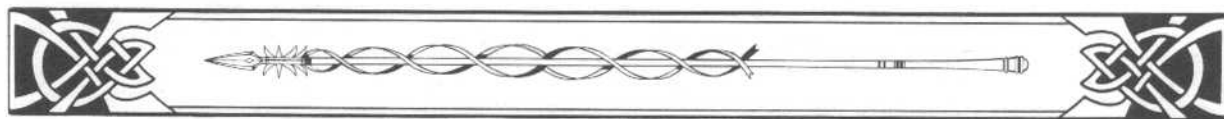
May the gods—and the Emperor—have mercy upon me. Unless some wondrous surprise occurs, I shall have no recourse now but to return to the Court of Hamblish and report my failure. If ever there was a magic tapestry, I believe it is gone now.

In the sealed cavern we found an ancient box made of gold. Its lid is inscribed with glyphs of some sort, but none in my company can read them. Possibly the gold box once held a treasure—maybe even the legendary tapestry. But it is quite empty now.

To add insult to injury, our gully dwarves—after all our days of labor—broke through into the hidden chamber and promptly disappeared. Yet when we emerged again into the great chamber, some of them were there. Investigating, we found that there was a second entrance into the hidden chamber, unobstructed by fallen stone.

Pestilence take all gully dwarves! Through all the days of digging, they knew there was an easy way in. They knew it, but it never occurred to any of them to mention it!





Day 31—

More and more, I find gully dwarves to be virtually intolerable. The sheer stupidity of the creatures is beyond belief. Today our search came to a halt for several hours because the Highbulp had lost his cloak. We had stones to move and crevices to open, but Crump's constant complaining so distracted his subjects that we could get no work out of them. Crump sulked around, wearing nothing but his foot-wraps and a filthy rag wrapped as a diaper. And every time we blinked, it seemed, the others were wandering off looking for his lost cloak.

To add insult to aggravation, some of them apparently raided my personal luggage. The Highbulp is clothed again, and his new cloak is my best shirt! How they got it is beyond understanding, but I must consider it lost. I certainly don't want it back now that a gully dwarf has worn it. On top of everything else, the observer Malus has disappeared. We searched everywhere and found no trace of him. Even his travel pack is missing.

Day 32—

There is no more time. We have explored the entire cavern system, every nook and cranny of it, and there is nothing else here to find. And if the astrologers are right, tomorrow will see the convergence of the moons.

If there is truth to Phlebius Gload's blasted conjecture about a lost tapestry, and if anybody cares, then let someone else find it many years from now, when the moons converge again. I have done all that is humanly possible, to no avail.

Of Lord Gload's nephew Malus, there is still no trace. I must assume he simply left, for whatever reason he might have had, and therefore is no longer my responsibility. I shall take the empty gold cask back to Xantach and make my report. After that, gods willing, I shall never again lay eyes upon a mine, a cavern, or a gully dwarf!

And as for Phlebius Gload, our glorious Master of Conjecture whose rantings prompted this expedition . . . given the opportunity, I may kill that long-winded pedant just on general principle.

Unrecorded events in This Place, yesterday or today:

The Highbulp awoke with a start, his nostrils twitching at the smell of punkwood smoke and pungent rat-meat stew. The familiar scents made his mouth water and his stomach growl.

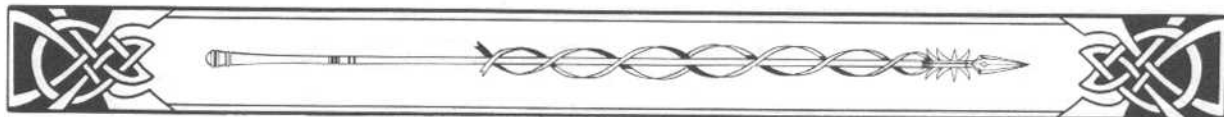
All around him were gully dwarves, wandering here and there, doing the aimless things that gully dwarves do. It was a pleasant, comforting scene to the Highbulp.

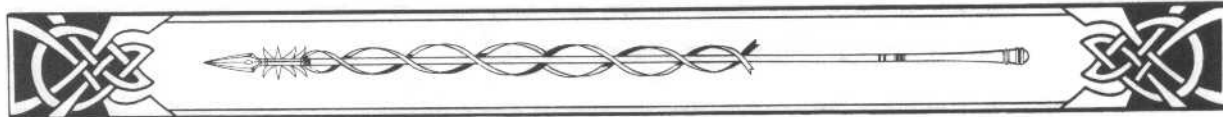
But there was something strange about it. Shrugging back his new cloak—which was now almost as filthy as the old one had been—Crump tilted his rat-tooth crown aside and scratched his head with grimy fingers, his bearded face ascowl in thought.

Then it struck him. There was no clatter of picks and shovels, no cracking of whips and no clamor of human voices. The cavern was tranquil and serene, quiet except for the drip of distant seeps and the familiar sounds of gully dwarves.

"Where talls go?" he muttered, feeling cranky. All around him, gully dwarves came and went, ignoring him. Crump stood, glared around, and shouted, "Hey, ever'body! Highbulp awake! How 'bout some 'tention here!"

Some of his nearer subjects paused, gazing at him curiously. One whispered to another, "Who th'





clown doin' all the hollerin'?"

"That Highbulp." The other shrugged. "Ol' what's-'is-name."

"Oh, yeah." The first nodded, remembering. Then, to Crump, "What you want, Highbulp?"

"Where all th' talls go?" Crump demanded.

Several of them spread their hands, shrugging. "Went 'way," one said.

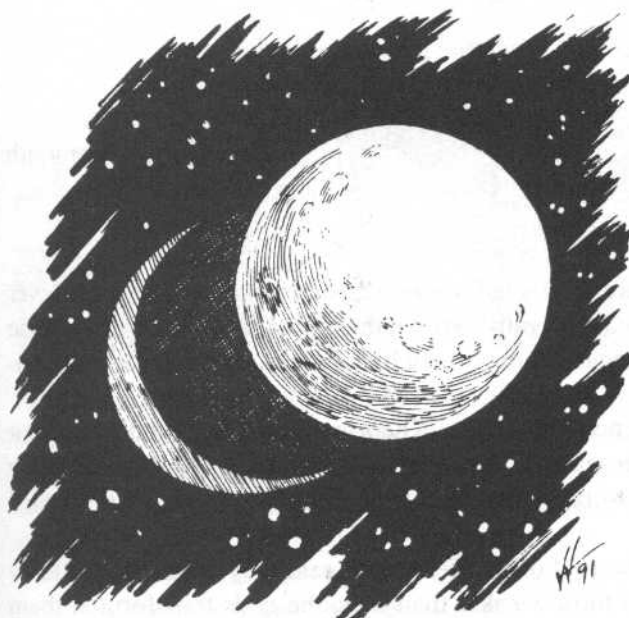
Crump thought that over, then nodded. "Good," he said. "They take anything?"

"Nothin' much," someone said. "Just ol' yellow box."

"What yellow box?"

"Box Highbulp's clothes used to be in. Nothin' in it, now. Why you ask?"

"Highbulp in charge here," Crump snorted. "S'posed to know stuff. Somebody bring Highbulp some stew."



Obediently, several of them headed for the nearest stew pot. "Highbulp a nuisance," one muttered.

That night, the three moons rose above the valley, one after another. As the white moon climbed the cloudless sky, the red moon overtook it and eclipsed it. Moments later the black moon eclipsed them both, and for a time the world was dark except for starlight.

On a lonely pinnacle, Malus the Observer—nephew of His Eminence Phlebius Gload, Master of Conjecture to the Court of Hamblish IV—looked up at the dark void and smiled to himself. By torchlight he drew from his pack a tattered rag of old fabric, and held it aloft in both hands. It was filthy and stained, and it smelled like gully dwarf.

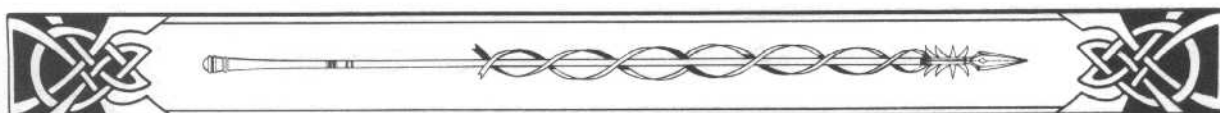
"Tell me the secret!" he commanded. "Let this power be mine alone. Tapestry of legend, show me the source of all sorcery!"

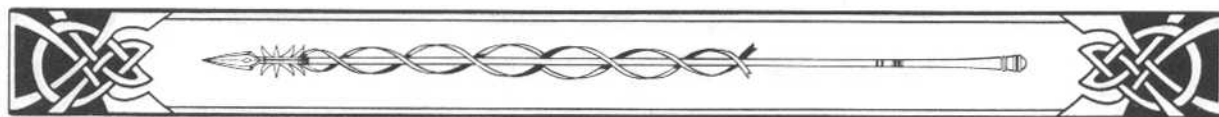
On the fabric's soiled surface, something moved—something tiny and dark that clung there for a moment, then seemed to leap from the cloth. It landed on his nose, and he caught it in swift fingers. Sweating with anticipation, he held it close to his torch and stared at it. Slowly his eyes narrowed and his brow creased in perplexity.

"A flea?" he muttered. "The source of all sorcery is a . . . flea?"

Deep beneath a mountainside, in a firelit cavern, the Highbulp Crump twitched as something beneath his cloak seemed to pulse with a life of its own. Soundlessly, then, Crump's "diaper" revealed to him alone the world's most powerful secret—the secret of all sorcery.

But the Highbulp didn't hear a word of it. He was fast asleep.





The Letters of Trayn Minaas

Bertrem's Note:

A very old manuscript, as can be ascertained by the archaic spelling of Irda as "Eerda," these letters provide interesting insight to that mysterious race—if the wild tale the young man tells is indeed true. My first thought was that this young man had been in a barroom brawl and was ashamed to tell his sister the truth, thus creating this fantastical adventure.

However, on my mentioning this to the Master, adding that such fabrications should not be given storage space in the Library, Astinus asked me if I had ever been in a barroom brawl.

I answered indignantly that I had not.

He asked if I had ever met an Irda.

I replied that I had not done that either.

He then said that, in view of my ignorance, the letters should be placed in the Library.

I can only most humbly concur.

Day 21, Seventhmonth

My Dearest Chriscinda,

I cannot know if you will ever read this, for I daresay it shall not reach you on its own, and if I never leave here, then there shall be none to bring it to you. But I must write it down, for if I do chance to come out of these darkened caverns and into the daylight again, it may seem like the waking world to a dreamer. And I do not wish to forget what has passed.

By my closest reckoning, it has been four days since I left you in Knedrin. Three of those days I spent on the road as I had planned, traveling to Breedle in search of help for Mother. I searched long for those of whom we heard rumors, those who have come to take the place of the vanished gods. At the last, I have stumbled into the land of legends.

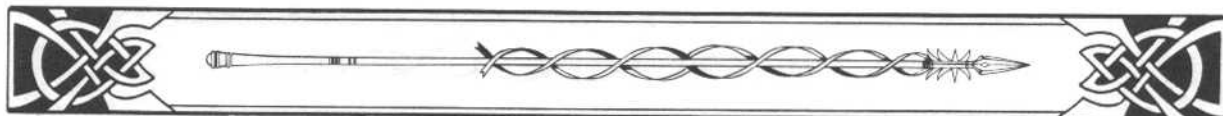
Do you remember, my sister, the stories Harlocke told of the Eerda? He said they were once a beautiful and magical race, but, through their cruelty to those weaker than they, the gods transformed them into the hideous and barbaric ogres. I know not how much of it is true or how much false, but I have met one and can affirm their existence.

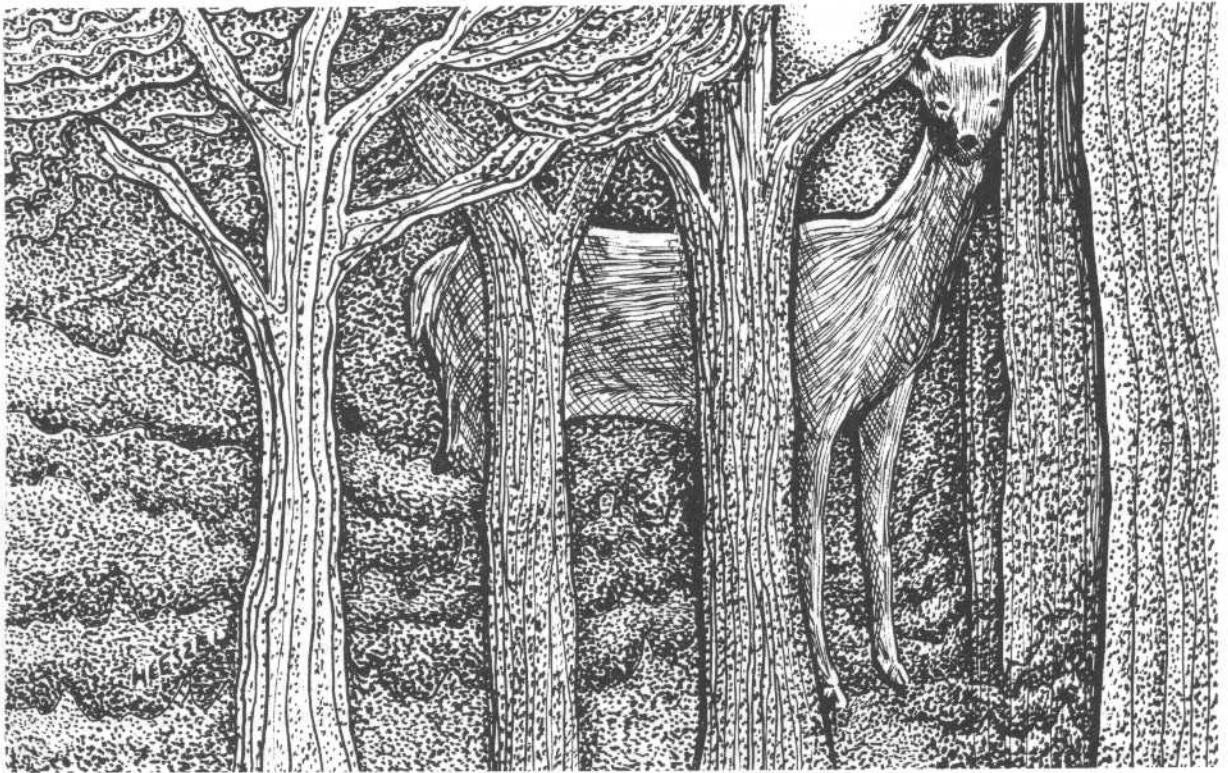
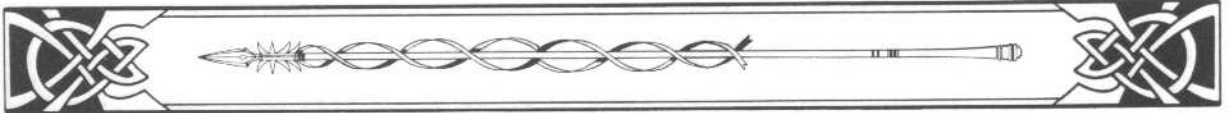
Let me begin. Let me retrace my steps as I walked them.

As I said, I traveled by the road for the first three days. On the third night, I pitched my camp as every night before. The sky was clear, the stars faded behind Solinari's bright light, so I could see quite well. I set to gathering rocks for my fire ring, as I was not yet tired and was going to read a bit more of the Solamnic history Harlocke had loaned me.

That was when I saw the deer. It was a doe, caught in the light of the moon as she emerged from the edge of the forest. I stilled my breathing and moved slowly toward my mount, where I had secured my bow and quiver. I began unfastening them. I almost had them loose when she saw me. I cursed silently, but kept my hands at their work.

She ran off into the forest, and I followed in pursuit. I gave no consideration to my mount and my supplies, of which I have thought often since. Surely they will be gone by now. Stolen, or worse.





The doe led me a merry chase. I almost lost her at the outset, so fast was she. I leapt and ran through the thick foliage, brambles tearing at my legs, limbs slapping at my face until we hit a granite ridge. The deer banked sharply to the right and continued. At that point, I almost gave up the chase, but she suddenly stopped short, as if she'd run into a net I could not see. She stood in the moonlight, calm and serene.

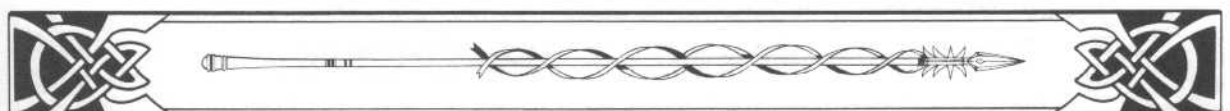
This sight had the same hypnotic effect upon me that swirling water has to a watching cat. I could not even raise my bow to take the shot, so stunned was I by her beauty. The doe twitched her head once, then, completely relaxed, she continued north along the ridge at a walking pace.

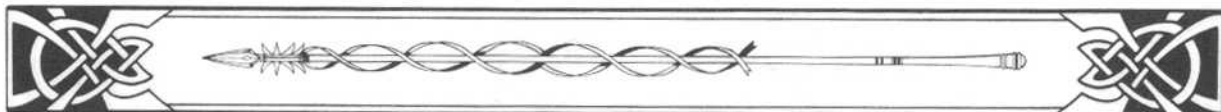
The hair on the back of my neck prickled. I followed the doe, spellbound. The doe did not walk long before she came to the opening of a cave and entered. I knew for certain then that something unnatural was afoot. Deer have no reason to enter caves. But at that point, the foreboding only drove me onward. I followed as quietly as I could.

The darkness of the cave was impenetrable. In my haste to follow the deer, I had left behind the tinder box. I groped my way forward, led by the clicking of the doe's hooves. I don't know how long I stumbled on in the dark. Not too long, I suppose. I imagine it was only ten, twenty minutes before I glimpsed a light ahead.

At first I assumed it to be my imagination; I thought my eyes were playing tricks. But when the light did not go away, I realized otherwise. The tunnel continued about thirty paces, where the floor ended abruptly. I could not see over the precipice, but the light came from beyond it.

The doe cast a stark silhouette against the orange glow and turned left, disappearing beyond the end





of the tunnel. Slowly I moved forward, and as I neared the drop-off, I could see below. I lowered myself to my knees and crawled forward until I could see more.

I caught my breath, Sister. It wasn't just the inside of a cavern. It was a room stolen from a palace! The walls of the cavern had been perfectly squared and were as smooth as if a master stonemason had hewn them. Finely carved wooden furniture—the kind you'd expect to see in a lord's house—filled the room. A couch with red velvet cushions sat against the wall to my right, next to a small, square table. Next to the table on the far wall was a chair of the same workmanship as the couch. To the left of that, an archway, and to the left of that, a large fireplace. The fireplace, cut back into the stone some three feet, stood four feet high and six feet wide and a fire—the source of the light—was burning.

I crept forward a bit more, keeping my belly flat against the cool stone. I saw then where the deer had gone. In front of me, the drop-off was sheer, but to the left a stairway descended gradually, sweeping to the floor below. The doe stood at the base of the steps. She then moved into the room at that same calm, slow walk. She stopped in front of the fire, gazing at it.

I gasped. There was no wood in the fireplace.

The last lingering doubt that magic was at play flitted out of my head, and my senses finally returned. I knew that I had to get out of there—immediately. I was in over my head. I began creeping back as swiftly and silently as I could.

Then the deer vanished and a woman stood in the room. I almost gasped again (thank Paladine I did not). She was the most beautiful woman I have ever seen! Her face was pale and smooth, with fathomless eyes. Her hair was black and very long, or at least so I assumed, for it was all arranged in a strange weave on top of her head and fixed by a silver clasp, save for two thin braids that draped in front of each of her ears. She wore a dark green, soft leather tunic with black breeches to match. A thick black belt cinched the tunic at her waist, and from it dangled a single pouch.

I waited in the shadows, safe for the moment, as my mind wondered at all that had been set before me. What was the woman doing here? I had always heard that mages—as she surely must be—lived in towers. Why would one take sanctuary in a cave? Was she a renegade from her own kind?

Suddenly, as if he had materialized out of the flames of the fireplace, a man stood in the room. He was very tall, though slender, and he used his height as a means of looming over her. His clothes were different from hers. His dark blue tunic opened at the neck, the hem decorated by jewels. His breeches were black and he wore tall black boots. His belt was identical to hers, though, complete with the pouches. He had curly brown hair, and his eyes were deeply set. From my vantage point, I could see only shadows under the furrowed, craggy brows.

The woman was not surprised at his sudden appearance. She seemed not to notice. She barely glanced at him, walked to the couch and reclined into the soft velvet.

"You need not have come back here yourself, Daedil," she said. "I understand the urgency."

"Then you will come?" Daedil asked.

"No." The woman smiled and patted the couch. "Won't you sit down?"

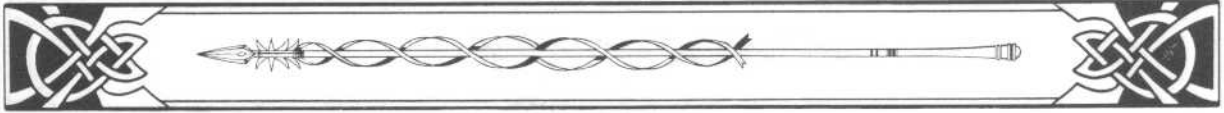
He crossed his arms over his chest and scowled at her. "What do you mean 'no'?"

"Come now, Daedil, 'no' is a simple word—"

"Don't patronize me, Katari! The edict comes from the Most High. The gods have left the world. The Eerda must leave Ansalon."

My first thought upon hearing that word was that he could not possibly be serious. The Eerda were a legend, nothing more. But reality was slipping away bit by bit. First the enchanted deer, and then this room, and then Eerda. I listened on.





"The Most High is not an emperor, Daedil. He is a councilor and nothing more. He does not rule the Eerda," Katari countered, shifting a little on the couch.

"It was decided by all of us."

"Not by me."

"You didn't deign to grace us with your presence," he said, growing angry. "Therefore you forfeited your say in the matter."

Katari shrugged. "I had more important matters to attend to. The moon is shining. It is a lovely night for walking."

He seemed flustered, and a flush reddened his face. "It is for the benefit of all, Katari."

"Not my benefit. I love my forest home. I do not want to leave. Go—and take the entire Council with you, Daedil. I shall remain."

He hesitated, then said, "I did not realize you would be so stubborn, Katari. It will not go well with you. They will authorize the use of force."

Katari's hand slid easily to one of the pouches at her belt, though she did not move otherwise. Her posture seemed as relaxed as ever. "Will they?" she asked.

Daedil lifted his chin a bit. "I am not challenging you, Katari. It is not my place—"

"Nor within your abilities," she said with a smile that chilled me.

Gritting his teeth, Daedil continued, "I was merely sent to talk some sense into you. I can see now that my effort was wasted."

"Quite."

He shook his head. "There are many who are more powerful than you, Katari."

"Send them."

Daedil turned on his heel and stalked back into wherever it was he had come from and disappeared.

The tale of the Eerda that Harlocke told us long ago returned to me. Do you remember it, Chriscinda? He said that whoever captures an Eerda can ask of them anything they desire!

Thoughts of leaving the caverns vanished. I began to scheme. How could I possibly capture her? A net would be ideal, from my vantage point. All I would have to do was wait until she walked underneath my hiding place, and then drop it over her. But I had no net. All I had were my bow and quiver of arrows.

I thought for a moment, and then the idea came to me. If I had thought about it a little more, I would have seen the many holes in my plan, but I didn't. Katari was still sitting on the couch, pensive, gazing at the unnatural fire. Nocking an arrow, I took a breath and stood up.

Immediately, her eyes were on me and she reached for her belt.

"Don't!" I yelled, arrow taut in the bow.

She froze, considering. Her eyes narrowed as she fixed her dark gaze on me. She was so lovely, I almost threw down my bow and fell to my knees. "Keep your hands away from your pouches, Eerda," I said, trying to swallow my fear. "Katari," I added.

She still said nothing, still gazed at me.

"Move your hands away from the pouch, up in the air."

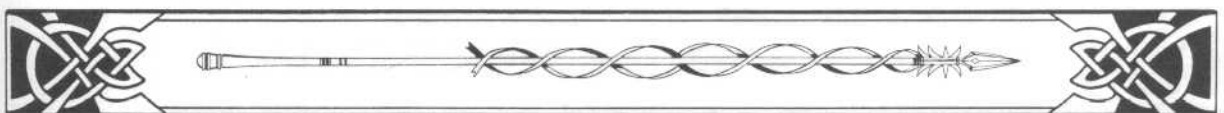
She smiled a little, even as she moved her hands slowly outward. "So, you overheard our conversation."

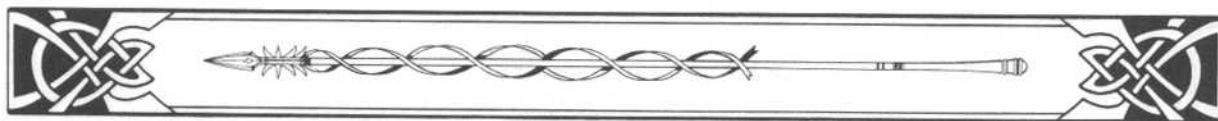
I did not trust that smile, but I trusted her hands even less. I tried to watch both.

She shrugged, still smiling. "I am at your mercy, my lord. Are you a robber, then?"

"I'm asking the questions," I said. "Are you truly an Eerda?"

She nodded. "Yes, I am."





"Then I have need of a wish."

"I'm afraid I don't understand." She pursed her lips and started to move her hand in an accompanying gesture.

"Don't move your hands!" I said, remembering how adeptly she had reached for her pouch when she had been arguing with Daedil. I walked slowly down the steps to my left.

"I apologize, my lord. What is this about a wish?"

"If I capture you, you must grant me one wish," I returned, feeling each step with my feet, since I could not take my gaze from her.

"Ah, yes. That old wives' tale. Of course."

I took another step, and another. "I wish you to heal my mother. She was stricken with the mountain fever after the Cataclysm. She is in terrible pain. I think she is dying. The clerics have left with the gods. I wish my mother to be healed."

Katari looked surprised. "You do not wish for great wealth? Most would ask for that, I think."

"I wish you to heal her," I repeated.

"Ah, but it's not that simple," she said.

"Why? You are my prisoner."

"I am at your mercy, at arrow point. But I remain uncaptured."

"What's the difference?" I said, descending another step.

"Oh, there is a difference." She was smiling again. "According to the legend, my hands and feet must be bound before I am truly captured."

I remember thinking at the time that I had enough cord in my large pouch for that. What a fool I was, my sister! For when I took the next step, my foot touched nothing but air. The steps were an illusion!

I crashed to the floor and remember nothing more except pain. When I awoke, I was lying on the red velvet couch. My leg ached; there was a splint on it. I had broken bones in my fall. Katari stood over me, just out of arm's reach. She was much taller than I'd originally thought; she must have been close to six feet. There was no smile now. Her eyes were dark and sad.

"Humans." She spoke in a low voice. "How your barbaric kind ever managed to overthrow our ancestors is a mystery to me."

I swallowed, said nothing.

"And your so-called legends," Katari continued. "How naive you are!"

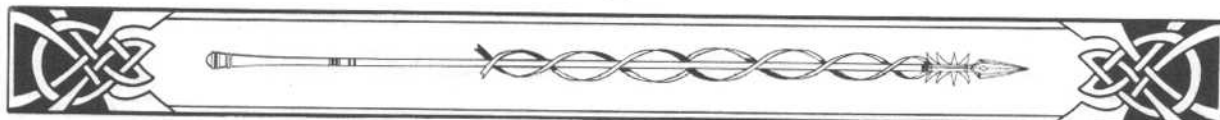
"Then it's not true," I whispered.

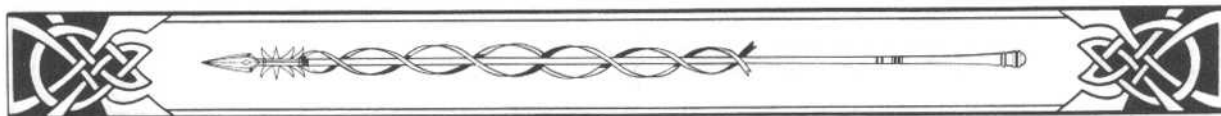
"Of course, it's not true!" she scoffed. "No human could ever capture an Eerda."

I lowered my eyes. My folly was already plainly apparent to me.

"If you're wondering why I haven't killed you," she said, reading my thoughts, "it is because you intrigue me. You are exceedingly ignorant, like most humans." Her smile returned for a moment. "But you do have a great deal of bravery. And I admire your unselfish wish. I shall decide later what to do with you. In the meantime, if you are hungry, I have left some food on the table."

And so she left me, Sister. Before, I could think only of legends and rewards, and Mother in miraculous recovery. Now, as I write to you, I think longingly of you and Mother and Harlocke.





Day 23, Seventhmonth

Dear Chriscinda,

Fate is strange, my sister, and capricious. Ah, the things I have seen and lived to tell about! But I shall not race ahead of myself.

The Eerda returned in the morning and sat down in the chair. She gazed at me for a long time. "The question now, I suppose," Katari said, her voice deep and rich, "is what to do with you."

"If you let me go, I'll leave and never return. I swear it! I swear upon Paladine." Force of habit. I had forgotten Paladine had hurled a fiery mountain on us and then left us.

"Paladine, will you?" She shook her head, sighed, again looked sad. "Even if you kept your promise, you are human. You could not resist telling your story to others, and they would want to come and try out this Wish Legend of yours, as well. She pointed to the letter I had written to you, Chriscinda, which lay in my lap.

There was a long pause then. I could think of nothing to say in my defense, and I sat there, miserable and afraid.

"So, human," she continued. "Among my people, we consider ourselves in debt to those who do us a kindness. I have bandaged you and fed you, and yet you have not even told me your name."

"I'm Trayn."

She nodded. "And I—as you overheard Daedil say—am Katari."

Her mention of my eavesdropping reminded me of the conversation I had overheard.

"What did he want? He threatened you. Are you in danger?"

She shrugged. "The Council is a bunch of frightened rabbits. They are simply jumping at shadows again. Ever since the fall of the First Civilization, they have spent all of their time running and hiding. It is not unwise"—she looked at me meaningfully—"to keep ourselves hidden from people like you. But I weary of a fugitive existence. The Council believes that complete withdrawal from the world is best. I hold a different belief. It brings me into conflict with them from time to time."

"What belief is that?" I asked.

Her eyes narrowed. She seemed reluctant to speak. Perhaps she was telling me secrets of her kind that humans were never meant to know. "I think that withdrawal from the rest of the world is dangerous. In fact, that is what I believe caused the original Fall."

"The fall? What fall? Do you mean the fall of Istar?"

She laughed. In that instant, I saw her beauty as I had seen it when I'd first beheld her. Her black hair shimmered in the light cast from the fire. Her eyes, so black and depthless, her crimson lips, sharp-boned chin, the small divot at the base of her throat. No flaw marred the perfection of her pale skin. I wondered suddenly how long I had been gaping at her. My cheeks grew hot.

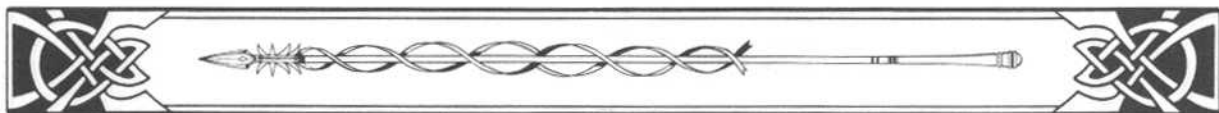
Her eyes glittered with amusement—or maybe tears. "No, I mean a far more tragic fall. The fall of my people. We ruled all of Ansalon before humans or elves had two thoughts to rub together. Before the dwarves even existed. We did not pay attention to the many signs warning us of the Fall. We did not pay attention, and therefore, we did not correct our mistakes. That is what I fear we are repeating now."

"The legends say that most of your people became the ogres. Is that true? Was that when it happened?" I spoke hesitantly, not wishing to liken someone as beautiful as she was to an ogre.

She paused for a moment, then nodded. Her face was very pale. "Yes. But they were fools. They deserved their lot."

"How could you know that? It was so long ago!"





"How indeed?" she asked mockingly. A smile twitched briefly at the corner of her mouth. "Time runs differently for us, Trayn. I won't explain, because you wouldn't understand, and it would be against the Council Guidelines. According to them, I have already told you too much. I have—"

A flash of light pulsed twice in the darkened archway. Instantly, Katari was on her feet. "So," she said, "Daedil was serious."

I noticed that she had deftly uncinched her pouch even as she carefully stepped to the left side of the door and crouched in hiding.

"What is it?" I asked, sitting up. Pain shot up through my leg into my entire body. I groaned.

I cannot tell you the fear that thundered in my heart, Sister, as I awaited what might come though the door. I had caught her unaware, with an arrow pointed straight to her heart, and she had been as relaxed as if reading a book. Now her eyes were alert, and there was the tenseness of a cornered animal in her posture.

Then he stepped through the archway. Physically, he looked to be in his forties, with light brown hair and a bit of gray at the temples. His hair was short and wavy, his eyes were gray, his face had a sturdy strength. Like Katari, he was beautiful. He wore very rich clothing, all black and silver. His shoulders were wide, though he was not bulky, and a silver cape draped from them to brush the ground. Though he had the appearance of a large human, I knew in an instant he was another Eerda. His eyes bore into me. He was followed by Daedil.

"Where is Katari?" the older Eerda demanded.

His voice made me jump. I would have answered him immediately, except that my tongue seemed to have grown three times too big, turning to stone in the bargain. I made a small noise, but could form no words.

The Eerda's lip curled in disdain.

At that moment, Katari attacked.

It all happened so fast, I cannot even remember precisely where everyone was, let alone what sorts of things crackled through the air. In the first instant, Katari's voice was chanting words I could not recognize, and the next, bright lights filled the cavern.

The older Eerda staggered backward under the onslaught of blue lightning that forked out from one of Katari's hands. Daedil made a motion with his hand and tried to say something, but a green cloud suddenly appeared, enveloping him, and he started to choke. The green cloud became crystal, trapping him inside.

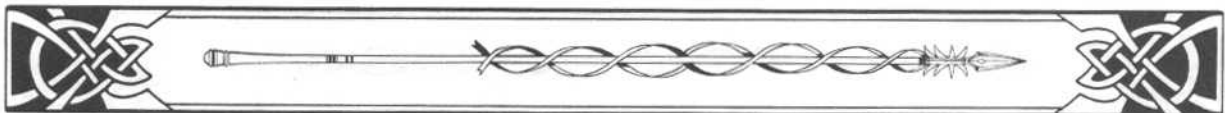
The older Eerda shouted, the blue lightning shattered. The shards did not dissipate, though, instead hovering for an instant, then flying at Katari like thrown knives. She never ceased her chanting, and the shards exploded against a flash of green.

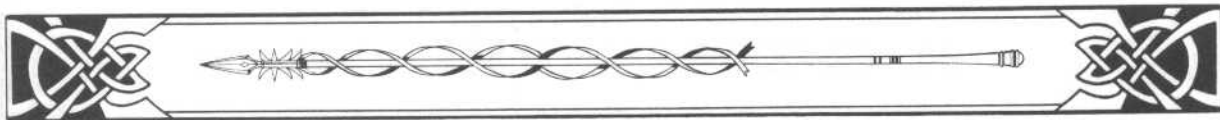
Smoky red tendrils shot out from the older man's eyes and wrapped around Katari. She yelled something and they faded a little, but did not disappear. Katari sagged slightly in their grip. Another surge of blue lightning streaked out of her fingertips. The older Eerda flew into the air. The lightning missed him.

Again red tendrils smoked out and wrapped around Katari. For the first time, she cried out, grimacing. She shouted something in that strange language and there was a final flash of blue, but to no effect. She slumped forward, held upright only by the red tendrils of smoke.

The older Eerda shook his head. He was still hovering above the ground. "Truly you have grown full of yourself, Katari, to think you could best *me* in such a game. And to break the One Law! That is cause for death."

"I did not break the One Law, Kehdesn. You are still alive, and so is Daedil." Katari said sullenly.





"You used lightning, Katari. That is lethal!"

"To most, maybe. I knew you would have protections strong enough, and if you hadn't, you would have deserved your fate. This is my *home*, Kehdesn! You have no right to try to force me to leave it!"

"You have disobeyed the Council for the last time, Katari. We have tolerated your rebellions thus far because you are young and childish. Perhaps that was a mistake. Daedil tells me you have been out among the humans, talking to them, working with them."

He cast a disparaging glance at me. "You even bring these strays to your home! You are jeopardizing our race. The Council cannot allow that."

"The Council does not rule over me!"

"The Council has been created to keep us from making the same mistakes that almost led to our downfall."

"The Council *will* be our downfall, you idiot!" Katari cried. "Don't you see what arrogant fools they are? The Empire fell because we thought we were equal to the gods. We are not. We are a part of the world. We should be helping others, as I do."

"You are wrong, Katari."

"And you are blind!"

"You must be punished. We must set an example for others."

Katari shook her head. "It is so obvious, and yet you cannot see it."

Fear raced through my entire body, my sister. I could not think of what to do. After the magical battle I had just witnessed, I shuddered to think what torments they would inflict on Katari. The older Eerda had forgotten all about me.

What can I do? I thought. Nothing! He will blast me through the cavern wall should I try anything!

Among my people, we consider ourselves in debt to those who do us a kindness.

Katari's words echoed in my head. I had threatened her, and she had nursed me and fed me. From what Daedil said, she had been helping our people. She did not deserve to be punished. I realized that she was right, my sister. I was in debt to her. I could not let her be tortured and punished, even by her own people.

I rose from the couch as quietly as I could. Pain lanced through my broken leg, but I barely noticed it. There was only one thing I could do. I had no strength for anything else.

No one was paying any attention to me. With as much power as I could muster, I hopped on my good leg. It took two hops to reach the place where the Eerda hovered a foot off the ground. My shoulder took him in the back of his knees. We fell to the floor in a heap.

The pain throbbed in my leg and I was so dazed by it that I did not notice anything else. When the pain finally eased, I looked fearfully at the Eerda. His mouth was slightly open, his eyes half-shut and rolled up. There was a spot of blood under his head where it had struck the stone floor.

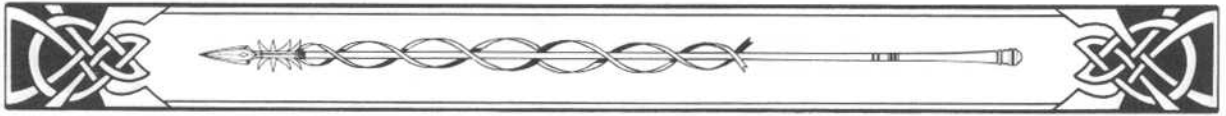
"Paladine's claws!" I whispered in awe. I realized with horror that I had just killed him.

A sudden flash of blue light brought my attention around to Katari. She dissolved the remaining tendrils that had bound her. Immediately, she moved to the Eerda and pushed her fingers gently against his neck.

She sighed. "How fitting," she said. "But, of course, the irony is lost on you."

"The original Empire built by the Eerda was brought down by a human slave who did his master a kindness," she told me. "This slave disobeyed his orders and, in doing so, saved the master's daughter from being kidnapped. Because of this, the father did not kill the slave for his insubordination, as custom bade him do. The slaves—thinking the master was soft—revolted, tearing down what my





ancestors had built. My people considered them no threat, just as Kehdesn regarded you."

She shrugged. "That, of course, is not the entire story, but the part that fits. Today, you have done me a kindness, hu—" She stopped, smiled. "Trayn. And I shall reward you for it. How did you come here?"

"I had a horse, and supplies, east of here. Along the road."

"Bide a moment." She began chanting under her breath, her eyes closed. In a moment, she opened them. "Your horse still waits for you where you left him. Can you stand?" she questioned, reaching her hand out to me.

"I think so." She practically picked me up with one hand, and I marveled at the strength in her slender arms.

"I would allow you time to rest here, Trayn, to recover your strength, but obviously my home is no longer safe, even for me. I shall transport you magically to your horse."

"What will you do, Katari?" I looked at the dead Kehdesn, and then at the frozen Daedil.

She shrugged and sighed. "All is not as it would seem to human eyes. The Eerda are accustomed to conflict with one another. We are a very proud people." She gave a rueful smile. "This is worse than most, but not unprecedented. I must go talk with the Council and listen to their arguments for this flight from Ansalon. Perhaps they have a point." Her eyes took on a far-off look for a moment and then focused sharply on me again. "At least I shall have my say. To me, that is what matters most."

I had no words, my sister. What could I say? I understood only half of all that she said.

"Thank you," I managed.

"I have one final question for you," Katari said. "Your mother has the mountain fever, you said?"

I nodded.

"I could not heal her. I am not a cleric. But there is a plant which grows in the Kharolis Mountains to the far south, beyond Xak Tsaroth, that can heal the fever. It is called the *pincht* plant, orangish in color. Its leaves look like a hand with seven fingers. If you take these leaves and grind them with the juice of a lemon, or an orange, and give it to your mother once every day for a month, she should mend."

"I can never repay you," I said. "And I am truly sorry."

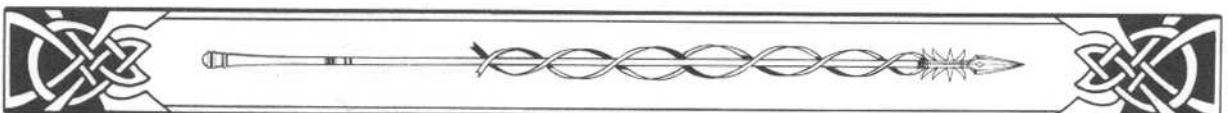
"Let us say that we are even, then," she cut in smoothly. "Fare you well, Trayn."

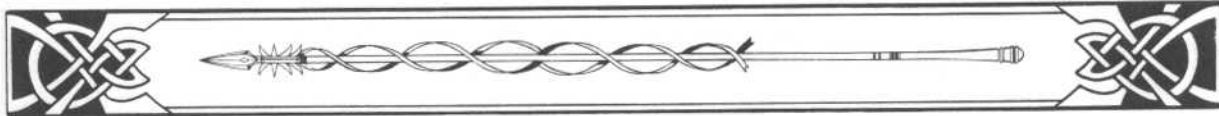
"And you also, Katari. Again, thank you."

She smiled and began chanting. The room warped, then it was gone. I stood in the glade by the side of the road where I had made my camp a day ago. It seemed like a lifetime since I'd run after that doe into the woods.

I have since sold my horse and purchased passage on a wagon going to Xak Tsaroth. I have asked about the *pincht* plant, but no one here knows of it. I shall travel south and find it. I hope these letters find you in good health, my sister. Give my love to Mother and Harlocke. I will see you soon.

Your brother,
Trayn





Lord of the Cats

I find the story of the Lord of the Cats extremely interesting, particularly because my Shalafi, Raistlin Majere, told me that he and his twin brother, Caramon, had once met this mysterious and fascinating personage. As you know, there has been considerable discussion among the scholars of the land concerning this "demigod." Is he real or is he merely a creature of legend and myth? I remember discussing the subject with Raistlin, and I wondered at the time at the Shalafi's knowing smile. It was after his death that I found this manuscript.

*—Dalamar, Tower of High Sorcery, Palanthas
to Bertrem, Library of Palanthas*

Bast, Lord of the Cats

When the HighGod created the animals, he gave them leaders to aid and lead them when the races of Krynn threatened their lives. Humans were the closest to the animals in possessing the three aspects of the gods, and the HighGod chose the human form for the leaders of the animals.

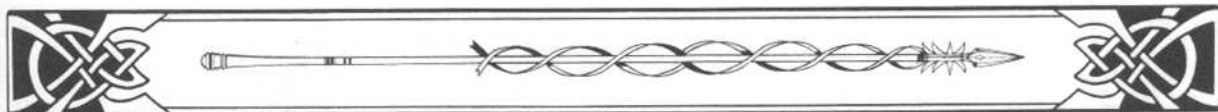
Bast is the first of the Catlords, a being taken from mortal life and bestowed with the Mantle of Immortality, raised to demigod status. Whether he was a cat who became a man or a man who became a cat is unknown—even to him, the memory mercifully removed by the Mantle. He does not even know if he is a native of Krynn.

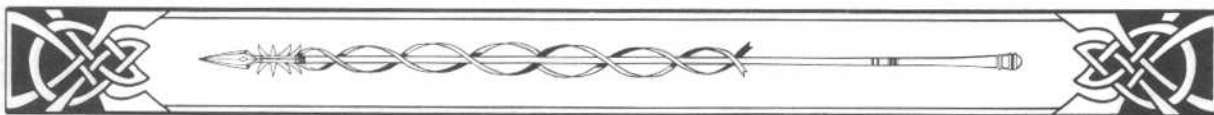
Bast's human form is that of an extremely handsome man with slanting blue eyes and skin black as night. He is tall, strong, and lithe, his movements fluid and graceful. His fingers have long, strong nails, perfect for slashing. He can leap great distances, both horizontally and vertically, and always lands on his feet. Bast is also amazingly fast and strong, and fights with no weapons except his hands, his feet, and his marvelous strength and agility. He wears tight-fitting black clothes; a number of oval-shaped jewels ring the neckline of his tunic.

As a demigod, Bast has great powers. He can walk in shadows unseen by any but the gods (and sometimes he can hide even from them). He can change form into any cat he desires, but his fur is always black. His wounds heal with rapidity. Bast has a number of other abilities, but the ones most important to him allow him to know the thoughts of any cat, and to travel through the realms with incredible speed to come to the aid of his subjects. As a comparison of raw power, a very lucky dragon might be able to kill Bast, but not before the Catlord had slain several dragons himself.

As a being somewhere between the gods and mortals, Bast must follow a number of rules that govern his behavior. He cannot interfere in the world at large. His most important task is to ensure the safety and welfare of his dominion, but like all cats, he likes to play as well. He will often allow the gods to bribe him in order to gain his aid for one of their plots. As I once said to my brother Caramon, "I have a feeling that Bast does not always play by the rules, even those laid down by the gods."

Mereklar is the name of the Mantle of Immortality given to Bast. Though he is very powerful, Bast can still be killed. However, the Mantle not only keeps him ageless, but lets him die nine times before he loses lordship over the cats. Thus far, Bast has died three times, twice saving his dominion, and once saving a friend. Even now there are plots and plans among the gods to punish Bast for his audacity, but for the moment, he is willing to wait and wander and travel, as is the pleasure of his kind.





The Legend of Mereklar, City of Cats

The Age of Dreams was the time of Krynn's creation. Reorx forged Chaos into form with a stroke of his hammer, creating the land, the sky, and all things material and mortal. The different races inhabited the new world, each particularly favored by the gods of Good, Evil, and Neutrality.

As he had allowed the gods to appear from Beyond, the HighGod created the animals. Born of the world itself, the animals contained a balance of all the godly forms. Dragons are the greatest of these creatures.

The race of man was the favorite of the gods of Neutrality, who believed humans to have the greatest capacity to choose the path of Good or Evil. With the exception of the powerful dragons, neutral humans were the most desired of the races since they could be swayed to follow any god's aspect.

Of course, some humans were more desired than others.

Among the most coveted humans was a young boy named Fool, who spent much of his time wandering through the dangerous lands of Krynn. Fool was tall

and strong, good with a sword, quicker with a smile and a gibe. Fool never came to harm, no matter what perils he encountered. And no matter what perils he encountered, he never grew wiser about avoiding danger. Fool took on life by the moment, shifting from Good to Evil to Neutrality, benefiting from all, loyal to none. His luck and capacity for good humor in any situation were legendary.

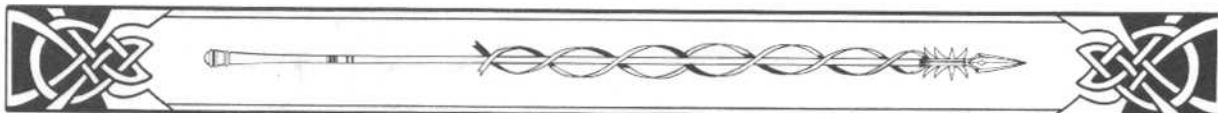
The three aspects of the gods each wanted to call Fool his or her own. Fool became a prize, and his movements were regularly watched by the gods, usually with glee when Fool did something inane at another god's expense.

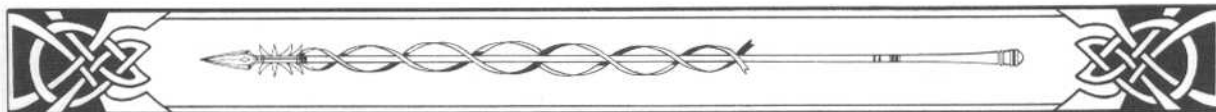
Almost as common as their watching was the gods' willingness to actually help Fool in times of need (such as when Fool seemed ready to finally pledge allegiance to one of the other gods). Though they did not appear in mortal guise themselves, the gods often sent aid in the form of luck or, almost as often, they sent an agent to do their bidding. It was because of an agent that the city of Mereklar was created.

The Story of Fool and the Ghost Rat

The Age of Dreams held the greatest wonders Krynn would ever know. Among them were the healing powers of true clerics and the greatest sorceries wrought by wizards. Also among them were the number of fiends and ghosts trapped on mortal soil. Mysteries were plentiful.

Fool loved mysteries and went out of his way to find them. He asked about legends of wandering spirits, strange hauntings, and impossible monsters at every town he found. While wandering through what are now called the Kharolis Mountains, near the Qualinesti Forest, Fool discovered a town filled with strangely quiet and furtive people. They were obviously afraid of something, which naturally intrigued Fool, who was afraid of nothing.





No matter how hard he tried to make them talk, the townspeople would not say what it was they feared. They would only tell Fool not to stay in the abandoned temple in the nearby mountains to the north. They said it was haunted. In many ways like a child (and as close to a kender as a human could ever be), Fool always did precisely the opposite of what he was told not to do. He thanked the townspeople and immediately left for the temple.

The road to the temple was hard and long and difficult to travel. Once the land had been filled with trees, flowers, and beautiful fields. Now everything was scrub brush and rocks. The sky was gray and threatened rain. Thunder rumbled through the mountain range.

All this made Fool more impatient to reach the temple. To him, it seemed as if the land itself were trying to warn him away, which meant something fabulous must lie at the end of the journey. Fool never broke his stride or his whistling tune.

The thunder continued to rumble throughout the mountains as night fell. The air grew much colder, and Fool considered stopping to build a fire. But he couldn't contain his excitement and pressed on. Fortunately for him, he came upon the temple less than an hour later, as the first drops of frigid rain began to fall.

The temple was as gloomy as he had hoped, both outside and in. The simple building was propped against the sloping mountainside by stilts of wood, and Fool could see from the construction that expert hands had seen to the crafting. He slid the door aside and entered the unlit room, shivering from the cold and excitement.

Fool was greeted by silence, darkness, and little else. He frowned with disappointment when he was not immediately attacked by ghosts. There was a stack of wood near a small, open firepot. He made a fire to keep himself warm, then sat at the only table in the room to wait for something to happen.

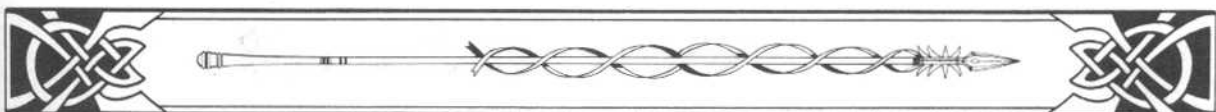
As the rain poured against the temple's wooden roof, Fool thought about how much he wished he had someone to talk to, such as his pet cat, which had been left at home. Thinking of his cat, he took a piece of charred wood from the fire and idly drew a picture of a cat on the table with the charcoal. When he finished, he drew another, then another, until the entire temple was covered with drawings of cats. Fool felt very tired. The fire did little to heat the room, so Fool climbed into a cabinet, closed the door, and curled up to sleep.

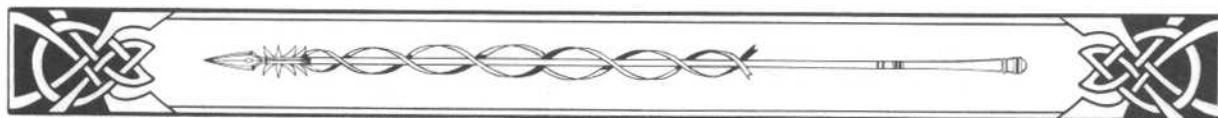
Fool did not know that the townspeople lived in terror of the giant ghost rat which lived in the temple. To even mention the rat brought it down out of the mountains into their homes, where it would kill anyone it found, including their children.

The ghost rat was an agent of Morgion, the evil god of disease, decay, and plague. Morgion's hold on Krynn was relatively small compared to that of the other gods, especially Paladine and Takhisis. He was forced to increase his holdings in surreptitious ways, so that gods opposed to his sphere of influence would not attempt to stop him. The ghost rat was one means which allowed him to slowly gain power.

Killing Fool would be Morgion's triumph over all the gods, including Takhisis. The temple, once of Good, had been infected by Morgion's influence. He set the ghost rat after its new prey.

Gilean kept closer watch on Fool than the other gods did. Gilean enjoyed the way Fool ceaselessly confounded every plan, plot, and godly machination, always bringing the overall balance back to Neutrality. Unfortunately, Gilean did not have the power to affect the temple or warn Fool of his peril. He sought another means, perhaps given the idea by Fool's idle drawings. Gilean sought out





the Lord of Cats.

Bast, the Catlord, cared nothing for the desires of the gods. He cared only for the safety of his dominion. He was often amused by what he termed the gods' "antics," and rarely interfered unless his subjects were imperiled. At the time of Fool's journey to the temple, Bast was being entertained by the Queen of Darkness herself, Takhisis. To his great enjoyment, she had been trying without success to enlist his aid for some vile plot. In return, she offered his subjects a city of their own where they would not be tormented, but be worshiped and revered. This definitely interested the Catlord, and he asked her to tell him more.

Takhisis told Bast that one of the other gods of Evil was planning on killing a young mortal named Fool. Fool loved cats so much that he had drawn the images of a hundred cats on the walls of the temple where he slept. As Fool was particularly favored by the gods of Neutrality, if Bast would save him, those gods would be grateful and owe Bast a boon. Takhisis showed the Catlord the image of a fabulous white marble city where his subjects could live. She, also, would be grateful for Bast's help in foiling Morgion's plan, because she wanted Fool for herself.

Like all cats, Bast was curious, but he was smart as well. Takhisis was known as the Queen of Darkness, and he did not trust her. He guessed she had some ulterior motive in mind. But in his pride, he thought he could outsmart her, as one of his subjects might outsmart a mouse. He agreed to her plan, but to himself said he would ensure that she did nothing to harm any in his dominion.

When Gilean told Bast of Fool's danger, the Catlord offered his help in exchange for a boon. He showed Gilean the plan for the shining white city and said he wanted this place built for the reverence of his dominion. The gods of Neutrality accepted. They, like Bast, never suspected the sinister nature of Takhisis's plan.

Fool awoke to the sound of the steadily pounding rain and the pounding of his own heart. For the first time in his life, for reasons he could not explain, he felt great fear. He heard noises inside the temple. Sliding back the panel to the cabinet, he saw a horrible, ghostly rat in the middle of the room! He shut the panel and prayed that he would not be found.

The ghost rat padded around the temple, knocking over the firepot and squealing loudly above the clatter of the rain. It snuffled near the cabinet, seeking the scent of the one it was commanded to kill.

It was just starting to dig its claws into the cabinet door, when Fool heard another sound—a yowl—then a fearsome hiss. Then he heard what he guessed were a hundred more of these new intruders.

The ghost rat's claws scraped against the floor as it turned and headed back toward the middle of the room. Fool waited, holding his breath. He was too terrified to peer out of his cabinet.

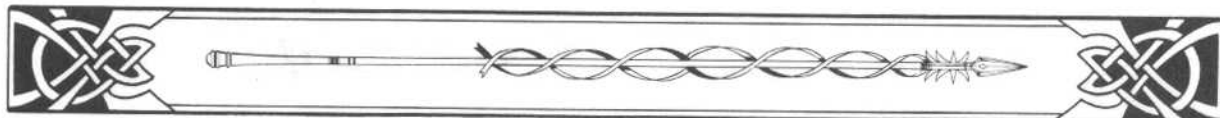
A fight ensued between the ghost rat and whatever else had entered the temple. The rat's squealing and the yowling of the hundred creatures was deafening.

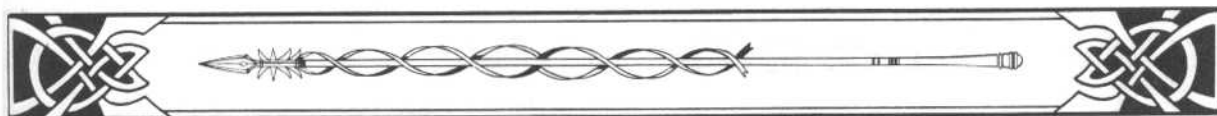
Then as suddenly as it began, the fighting stopped.

Fool waited until his curiosity got the better of him. He slid the panel back quickly and peered out into the room. He saw the giant ghost rat lying on its back, unmoving. Its body was torn by tiny wounds that bled red, ghostly blood. Fool did not know what had happened until he righted the firepot and set it alight.

Red, ghostly blood stained the claws and fangs of every cat he had drawn in the temple.

With the ghost rat destroyed, Morgion no longer had power in that land. Gilean leveled the temple and set out to build the city described by Bast. The Catlord was pleased with himself for being so clever.





Unknown to Gilean or Takhisis, Fool was also being watched over by Paladine, the most powerful of the gods of Good. He saw the city the gods of Neutrality were going to build for Bast and realized that Takhisis had counted on the Catlord's pride to blind him to her real plan.

As the city was being built, Paladine visited Bast, showed him the future and the Queen of Darkness's true reason for enlisting the aid of the Catlord. The city had a counterpart in the Abyss that was her home, and in this place lived horrible catlike fiends that she desired released into the world. The new city would act as a gateway between the Abyss and Krynn, allowing the fiends to enter when the Queen of Darkness could find the power to open the gate. She could not build the city herself, and had tricked the Catlord into having it built for her.

Bast was outraged at the Queen's attempt to send twisted abominations of his own kind into the world. His pride was wounded because she had tricked him. He vowed vengeance upon Takhisis. Paladine assured Bast that while his anger was well placed, his actions were not. Chagrined, the Lord of the Cats listened as Paladine explained that he and the other gods of Good had already influenced construction of the city by ensuring that the three gates set in the city's three main walls would close the moment Takhisis attempted to send her cat-fiends into the world.

Bast declared that, in return, his subjects would forever live in the city and fight the fiends if they ever dared come through the gate. The only way the cat-fiends would ever break free of the gates was by climbing over the dead bodies of every cat on Krynn.

Pleased with the Catlord's decision, Paladine added that the gate would not open until many years had passed and the three moons formed the Great Eye.

And so the city was raised and named Mereklar. It waited for the time when the Queen of Darkness would cause the end of the world.

Mereklar, the Great Eye, and the Plan of Takhisis

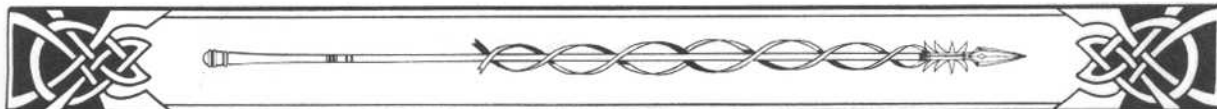
The Festival of the Eye is named for the time when the three moons of Krynn pass in front of one another and form what appears to be a frightening eye hanging in the night sky. On that day, children dress up and pretend they are wizards. The children also go to neighbor's houses and beg for cookies shaped and colored like the three moons. During this time, magicians are supposed to offer their services for free, though only they know why.

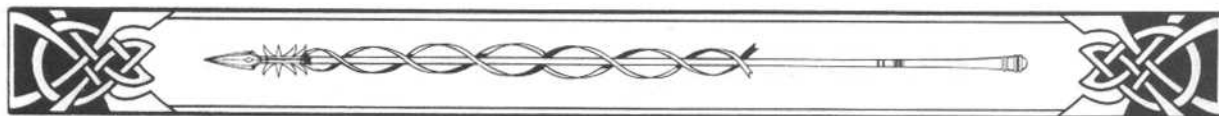
One conjunction of the three moons occurred during the Cataclysm. As the mountains of fire fell from the sky, three magicians, one Evil, one Good, and one Neutral, poured their magic into the Great Eye, creating a pool of power greater than any one of them could create singly. They all died in the process, each hoping his or her god would be the one to harness this great well of magic when the Eye formed again. As I said to my brother Caramon, "The sorcerers chose the game, but the gods cast the dice."

After Takhisis was trapped in the Abyss, she waited for another forming of the Great Eye, which would give her power enough to open the gate from her realm to Krynn through Mereklar.

Mereklar, the City of Cats

Mereklar is named after the Mantle of Immortality possessed by Bast. Made of white stone that no tool or magic can scratch, the city walls form a perfect equilateral triangle. Engraved on the walls are all the legends of Krynn, such as that of Huma and the silver dragon, the Master of Past and Present, and the Black Knight of the Rose. When new legends arise, new engravings appear. There are additional images in the tunnels and sewers beneath the city that depict Krynn's earliest history.





The three walls are five feet thick and each has a single gate in its center, placed there by Paladine. The gateways are large enough to fit five horses comfortably abreast, with three more standing on each other's shoulders. The raising mechanisms of the gates are hidden within the impregnable walls. The gates themselves seem to be made of iron, but they do not show any signs of wear or age. The bars of the gates are embellished with hundreds of metal plates, each inscribed with the head of a cat. There are only a few inches of space between the plates; not even a kender could slide through.

Inside the boundary of Mereklar's walls, the city is intersected by three main roads that meet at the center. The areas between these roads are filled with buildings made of the same impregnable stone as the walls. Every window has a perfect pane of glass that, if broken, fixes itself that day. There is regular irrigation of the many parks and forests by streams that have their sources somewhere beneath the city.

In the center of Mereklar lies the temple that Takhisis included in the city's plans she showed to Bast. The copy of Mereklar that exists in the Abyss has a temple as well, where the Dark Queen houses the strange machine-creature that will generate the gateway between the worlds.

The city is magically lit. When darkness falls, pools of light, moving like quicksilver, swell up out of the ground, then rise into the air at regular intervals above the city streets. Other lights leap to the tops of towers. Someone touching these lights would feel nothing but empty air in his hand.

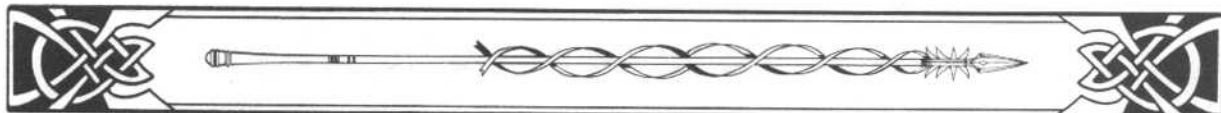
One might think that, since Mereklar was created for the Catlord that it would be populated only by cats. That is not true. The city is populated by humans, who believe (mistakenly) that their city is truly their own.

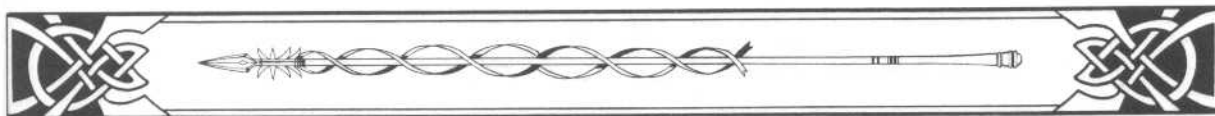
Mereklar is one of the most modern and progressive cities on Krynn. Public "conveyances" for hire provide transport through the city. There are stores that specialize in only one type of product, or taverns that serve only one kind of food. The most common of these restaurants sells a strong drink called hyava, which is brewed by straining hot water through dark beans, then served in very tiny cups. It was during my visit to this city that I discovered I had a great liking for this drink.

The city government is run by nine ministers and a Councilor. The ministers are in charge of agriculture, property, foreign affairs, internal affairs, labor, finance, and welfare. The other two ministers are the Director of Records, and Captain of the Guard. The ministers rule the city, but the Councilor makes the final decision in all matters.

Unknown to anyone in Mereklar, three magical lines of power dissect the city along the three main roads. These lines intersect in the temple at a large stone dais that twenty men with machines could not move. The lines are the conduits for the sorcerous power of the Great Eye to open the gateway between the worlds. I saw them for the first time when I accidentally had wine splashed in my eyes.

Despite all the wonders of Mereklar, the greatest wonder is the cats. Unbelievable numbers of cats make their homes in the city and wander freely from one house to the next. The cats are revered as the saviors of the world, as foretold in the prophecies engraved in the walls of every home. The number of cats is so great that they seem to form a moving carpet of fur and shining eyes. Strangely enough, there is not a single black cat among their number.





The Written Legend of the Cats of Mereklar

It is written, the land will know five ages,
but the last shall not come if darkness
succeeds, coming through the gate.
Darkness sends its agents, stealthy
and black, to find the gate, to
be there when the time arrives.
The cats alive are the turning
stone, they decide the fate,
darkness or light, in the
city that stands before
the first gods.

It is written,
the Lord of Cats
will come, aiding his
dominion, leading only
for them, following no other,
the agents for one and three.
The cats alive are the turning stone,
they decide the fate, darkness or light,
in the city that stands before the first gods.

The Cat-Fiends of the Abyss

The cat-fiends are nightmare visions of felines that walk on two legs like a man. Their bodies are covered in stiff fur, usually black, gray, or silver. Their heads have no fur and look like the skull of a dead cat, complete with a rictus grin of razor-sharp teeth. Their voices are rough and hissing.

The cat-fiends are highly organized and militaristic. They wear leather harnesses that convey their rank. They are extremely fast and strong, and can split a tree with a single blow. They can heal their wounds by mental power. Worst of all, the cat-fiends can be harmed only by enchanted weapons.

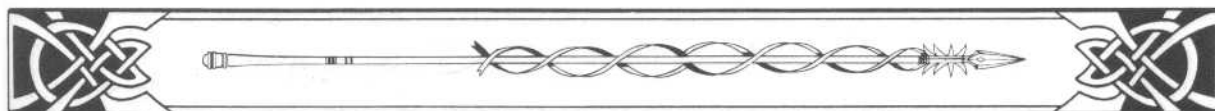
The weapons and technology of the cat-fiends are unlike any of those on Krynn. Their conveyances have no horses to pull them, but use some kind of mental energy exerted for locomotion. The main weapon of the fiends are their strange wands that concentrate feelings of hatred into a deadly beam of energy. The wands are about a foot long, bent at one end to form a slight handle, and covered with runes and sigla. A ring of metal circles the end where the energy is released. According to a woman I met in Mereklar, the wands have enough power to kill a demigod.

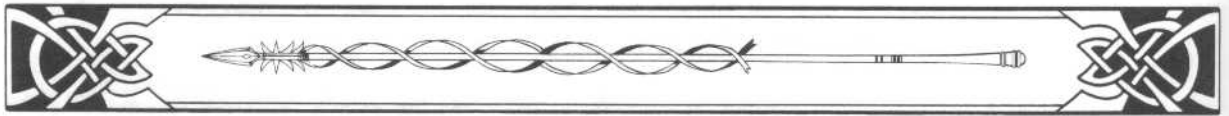
Fortunately for Krynn, the cat-fiends are vulnerable to the claws and fangs of mortal cats, which cause bleeding wounds difficult for the cat-fiends to heal. This is the reason why the cats are prophesied as being the saviors of the world: only they have the power to defeat these monstrous foes.

I know of one time at least when Takhisis endeavored to send her fiends into the world. My brother and I were witness to the terrible battle, during which I was privileged to meet the Catlord himself.

Many people ask me how to find the marvelous city of Mereklar. I do not know. I have never returned. But your cat knows. . . .

Raistlin Majere, Tower of High Sorcery, Palanthas





Gnomes on the Net

TO: Aldotheheadgnomeofsection23southwestquadrantNevermind.

FR: Falzowhowaspartofbigexplosiondivisionbutnownewconcepts

RE: PROPOSED NEW CONCEPT FOR COMMUNICATION.

ALDO,

THE PROBLEM:

The other day (well, three days ago, four if you count the day it took to write this and make three copies for the archives, master files, and main furnace), I was trying to find a companion (Mozarwho invented the oil burning toupee) for a consultation on a recent project. (Research into the gully dwarf musical scale—a study in duotones.) When Mozar did not respond to my initial bellowing, I sent an assistant to his workstation to bring him back. When that aide did not return in an hour, I went looking for Mozar myself.

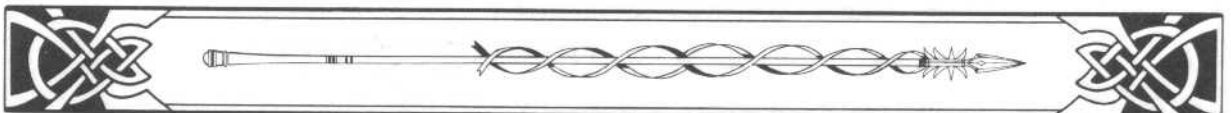
Mozar was not at his normal station. This was not unexpected, but a careful researcher examines all possibilities—imagine my chagrin if I searched the rest of Mt. Nevermind only to discover he was where he was supposed to be all the time (*I know*; it has happened to me before).

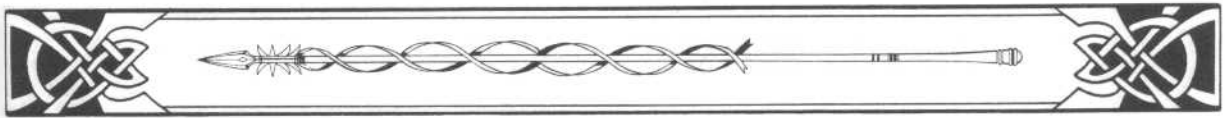
In any event, a friend of Mozar's said that Mozar had popped down to the Hair-Replacement-For-Gully-Dwarf-Assistant Department for more bear grease. I went to this department only to find that he had been there, but a rival colleague had just taken him away for a consultation on *his* project (the If-Gnomes-Can't-Fly-Can-We-Just-Swim-In-The-Air Project, a clear waste of resources, as I have said before). I stomped up to my rival's lair, only to find that Mozar had finished there and had gone to lunch. I was told that when I saw him, I could tell him my assistant was looking for him as well.

I dropped in on his favorite lunch spot, a balcony overlooking the Inner Hall, but he had just left there. Three more stops, including a hallway consultation (on the use of basilisks in solving the twin human problems of too many criminals and not enough lawn ornaments), and I retired to my own workshop, tired and haggard.

Of course Mozar was there, already, with my assistant, drinking my preCataclysmic wine. And of course, by that time, I had forgotten my original question. So I pulled up a bench and shared a mug of the fine old wine with Mozar and my assistant (whose name is BetawhoworksforFalzobutdreamsofcreatingacombinationshowernozzleandjamdispenser).

We all agreed that one of the chief problems facing gnomes today (outside of dragon highlords and the high levels of human-built tables) is communication. We can't find each other when we need to talk, and once we have found each other, so much effort has been put into the finding that we would rather curl up by the fire with some preCataclysmic vintage. Old methods—yelling, yelling louder, inventing something that allows one to yell louder still—no longer function as well as they once did, primarily since everyone is yelling at the same time, so no one can figure out what anyone is saying. I refer to this as the noise (yelling) to signal (people yelling at you) ratio, which must be reduced in order for us to lead quiet (well, less noisy) lives.





Therefore I proposed a new idea that would ease the problems of this noncommunication through linking various workers in an interlocked working-communications-system that would catch our messages much like the gnomeflinger nets catch our researchers. In short: a Net-Work of Gnomes.

THE NET-WORK: A Proposal

The initial concept of the working communication system is simplicity itself. We have all seen an absent-minded gnome tie a string around his finger to help him remember something, such as how to get home. Now, should that string be extended all the way to his home or workstation (often one and the same), then not only does he have a means to find his way home, but everyone who goes to his workstation knows where to find him. The idea of tying every gnome in Nevermind to their natural address by string (a string-address, if you will) makes locating various gnomes much easier. One end of the string would be attached to the workbench (to a large spool of string or yarn), the other end to a hook attached to the belt-loop of each gnome.

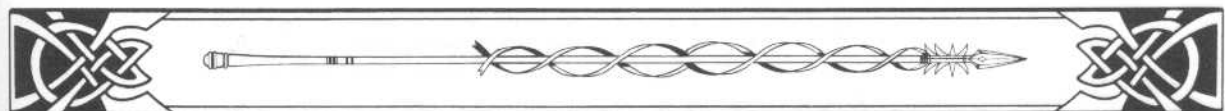
Now, when a gnome is at his workbench (his home-address, if you will), there is no need for him to walk around with the string attached. Early tests indicated that this was not feasible because if the gnome tended to pace while thinking, then the room would look like a spider's lair very quickly. Therefore, inside the door is a small hooked nodule, or NODE which the allows the gnome to tie off his string and go about his normal work. When he leaves the room, he should hook up again, and then others may track him down as afore explained.

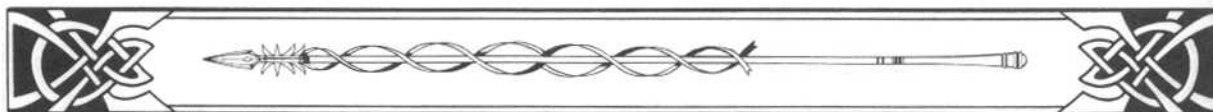
Once a gnome has moved around over a couple of days, the hallways and open areas become filled with strings, forming a truly interwoven net of communications. I propose we call this network the InterWeave.

One may Access the InterWeave in a number of ways. The most common way may be to follow the thread oneself, until finding the gnome at the end. But this may be time-consuming. Using the path already laid down in thread, the searching gnome may instead employ an Agent of some type to look for the individual. Previously, gnome-searching often has been done by assistants (such as my Beta, in the above case). Now, other creatures may be pressed into service.

I point out at this juncture that gnomes have always had a natural friendship with small woodland animals, and my assistant began testing a number of them to find out which would be suitable to act at our behest. The process was known as Beta Testing. Badgers proved to be too heavy for the Net, chipmunks too easily distracted, and squirrels singularly bad-tempered about carrying messages. Finally a small burrowing mammal, the gopher, proved to be the best choice. Beta himself raised and trained the test gopher, which readily traversed the test Net every time I called upon him. I have no doubt that, once we move into full-time production, these clever gophers will be able to locate anyone, anywhere, in Nevermind.

There are a number of conceivable perils which threaten our proposed Net. One group of test gnomes, finding hallways blocked, cut through the strings with short, chopping swords. These HACKERS disrupted the normal flow of communication and caused Gophers to get lost. Equally dangerous to the threads were groups of panicked gnomes who, faced with an overwhelming number of threads, set fire to the strings in order to make their own way clear. These we have named FLAMERS. One proposition is to replace the cotton string with thin, metallic extrusions. The gnomes, so WIRED, would be immune to Flames, though not to Hacks.





THE FUTURE OF THE NET

Worldwide Weave, a Mosaic of Different-Colored Lines

Need for a Super-Conductor

Penultimate Chip

We have studied the future of this project as we move to full implementation. Eventually we foresee this system reaching out beyond Mt. Nevermind itself as other people recognize the wondrous nature of this Net. Given the ever-increasing amount of Net traffic, it will be crucial to mark each line with a different color of yarn or thread, creating a Mosaic of different paths, a macrame of cross-connections. With more and more gophers running back and forth on the InterWeave, some method will be needed to coordinate all this Net traffic. We are working on creating an exceptional guide-director, or Super-Conductor, who will direct this expanding amount of information.

Eventually, all of Krynn will be covered by a WorldWeave of internettted strings, thread, and yarns. It will form a continual sunshade across all of Ansalon, undulating in the gentle breezes to form waves and tides like a traditional ocean. Once this level has been attained, the gnomes will take over from the gophers and, as befits their small size, will be able to ride these waves from place to place without ever touching the firmament.

As we will be the masters of this new domain, other races, such as humans and elves, will swear fealty to us and voluntarily become our vassals and serfs in exchange for access to this new world. We call this, anticipating acceptance, "Serfing the Net."

Please consider this request, since we are spending a lot of our spare time on this project, whereas I would prefer to work on it full-time. Since Beta is working on his jam-dispenser project simultaneously, we are often confronted with a gooey interface between the two.

What do you think, sir?

—F

TO: Falzowhowaspartofbigexplosiondivisionbutnownewconcepts

FR: Aldotheheadgnomeofsection23southwestquadrantNevermind

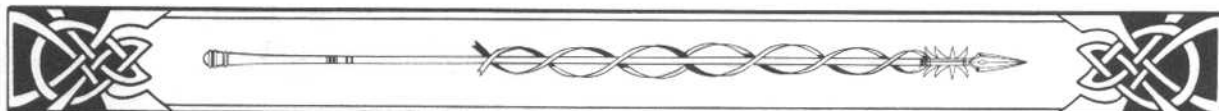
RE: PROPOSED NEW CONCEPT FOR COMMUNICATION.

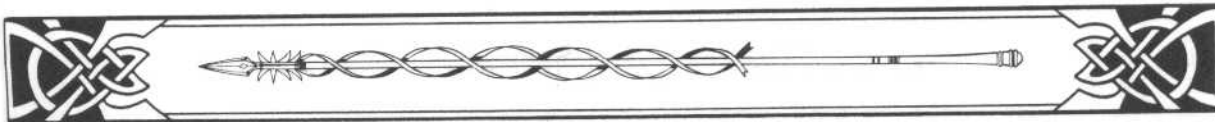
FALZO

Sounds like a "Go" to me. Meet me in my office after lunch. If I'm not there, I may be in the Nasty-Glowing-Artifact Room, or in the Department-of-Things-That-Have-Fallen-From-High-Up. Then again, I might be in the Department-of-Fiscal-Overview (on the balcony) or having dinner with the Committee-for-Cleaner-Hallways or playing "Confuse the Human" in the library. . . .

I'm sure you'll find me. Eventually.

—A





Dragon Aerial Tactics

To His Excellency, Highlord Ariakas
Emperor of Ansalon
King of Sanction
General of the Red Wing

From Highlord Kitiara
General of the Blue Wing

Inscribed this Spring Dawning, 352 AC, at Dargaard Keep

Re: Aerial Tactics employed in the Winter Campaign

Excellency:

You are no doubt aware of the significant difficulties encountered during the course of our most recent offensive. All of the dragon wings suffered reverses, and the accursed knights have forced us, temporarily, to withdraw behind the line of the Vingard River.

The shift in the campaign's momentum occurred over many battles and skirmishes, but can be attributed to a single factor: The opposition now has the aid of dragon allies.

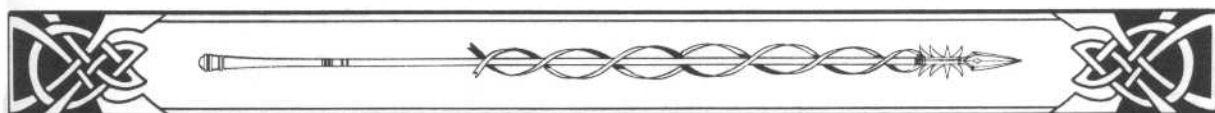
No longer can our wings sweep down unimpeded upon enemy troops, without a care for danger lurking above. Losses among all the wyrms, but most particularly the loyal and courageous blues, have been devastating—the dragons of metal rend wings, spit lightning or acid, and even strike at our riders with spells. Furthermore, the increasingly widespread use of the Dragonlance, with its deadly impact against our flyers, has forced a complete reevaluation of the manner in which our forces fly and fight in the air.

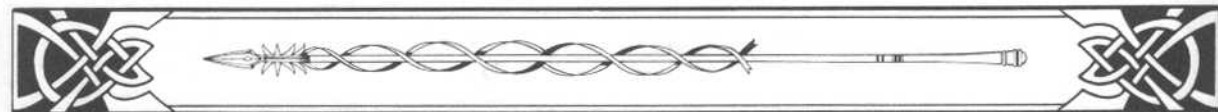
I have tried to summarize these developments for Your Excellency. It is my sincere hope that the knowledge we have gained in blood might be employed toward an eventual reversal in the fortunes of war—and that our bitter sacrifices shall not have been made in vain.

I) Formation and Support

Dragons flying independently of their comrades proved consistently vulnerable to a pair or trio of enemy serpents acting in concert. This was most vividly demonstrated in an early skirmish over the approaches to the High Clerist's Tower.

Seven mature reds approached two silver dragons. The crimson wyrms roared in, each striving to outdo the





others, craving the glory of a kill; the golds, conversely, stuck together. One guarded his companion's tail, fighting off every individual pursuer, while the leading gold sought out individual reds, sticking to a victim until he slew—or at least disabled—that dragon. Ultimately, all seven reds were driven from the skies, with neither of the golds seriously injured.

We adapted this tactic to our own ranks with notable success. Even when the entire wing flew into battle together, each dragon was assigned a partner; the two struggled to remain together through the aerial melee (this is not an easy task!) The benefits were consistently demonstrated: Attack effectiveness increased and chances of survival improved markedly.

II) Altitude

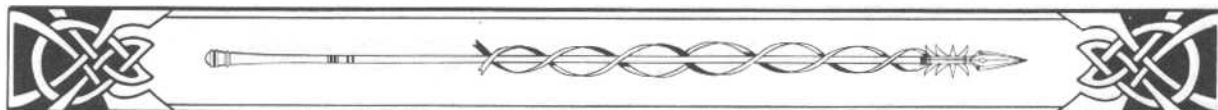
Previously our dragons had little reason to waste strength climbing high into the sky, unless a long flight was called for. After all, the enemies facing the dragons were always arrayed on the ground.

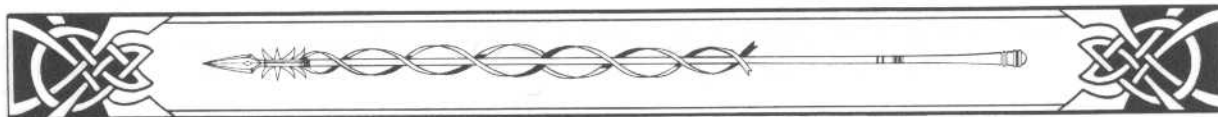
This is no longer the case. In recent battles dragons have fought dragons on many occasions. Time after time, the force that entered an aerial battle at the higher altitude won the day—or avoided extermination, even when facing a larger force.

The benefits of altitude seem to be twofold, affecting movement and fighting.

First, the more altitude a dragon, or any flyer, gains, the more speed it can muster by diving. A dragon in an accelerating dive can catch up to an enemy dragon faster than in ordinary circumstances; an attack from above also allows the dragon maneuvering room, should events dictate a swift withdrawal.

As far as the combat advantages, we found that dragonriders, more even than the serpents themselves, were vulnerable to altitude attacks. Dragonshields protect only against frontal assault; many brave warriors perished





from the peripheral effect of a fireball or poison gas cloud exhaled from above—even when such breath weapons are too diluted to offer much threat to the dragon itself.

III) Breath Weapons

Breath weapons are still among the most horrific attacks in the arsenal of any wing; however, their effectiveness in aerial battle is not as devastating as might be hoped, or expected. Indeed, I have found it preferable, for the most part, to order the dragons to exhale their killing effects upon the enemy ground troops, where a hundred might be slain in one scalding blast.

Aerial targets, it seems, move far too fast for most of the breath weapons to exact much of a toll. The lightning bolts of the black and, alas, bronze wyrms are the only breath weapons that can be hurled with any precision and speed. All the others exist in a relatively stationary, noxious cloud that surrounds a fast-moving flyer for only a very brief time. Though, as noted above, riders sometimes suffered grievous damage from this brief exposure, the dragons themselves typically emerged unscathed. (And as Your Excellency well knows, we have endless replacement riders!)

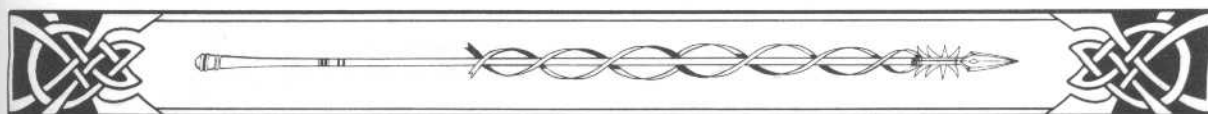
IV) The Dragonlance

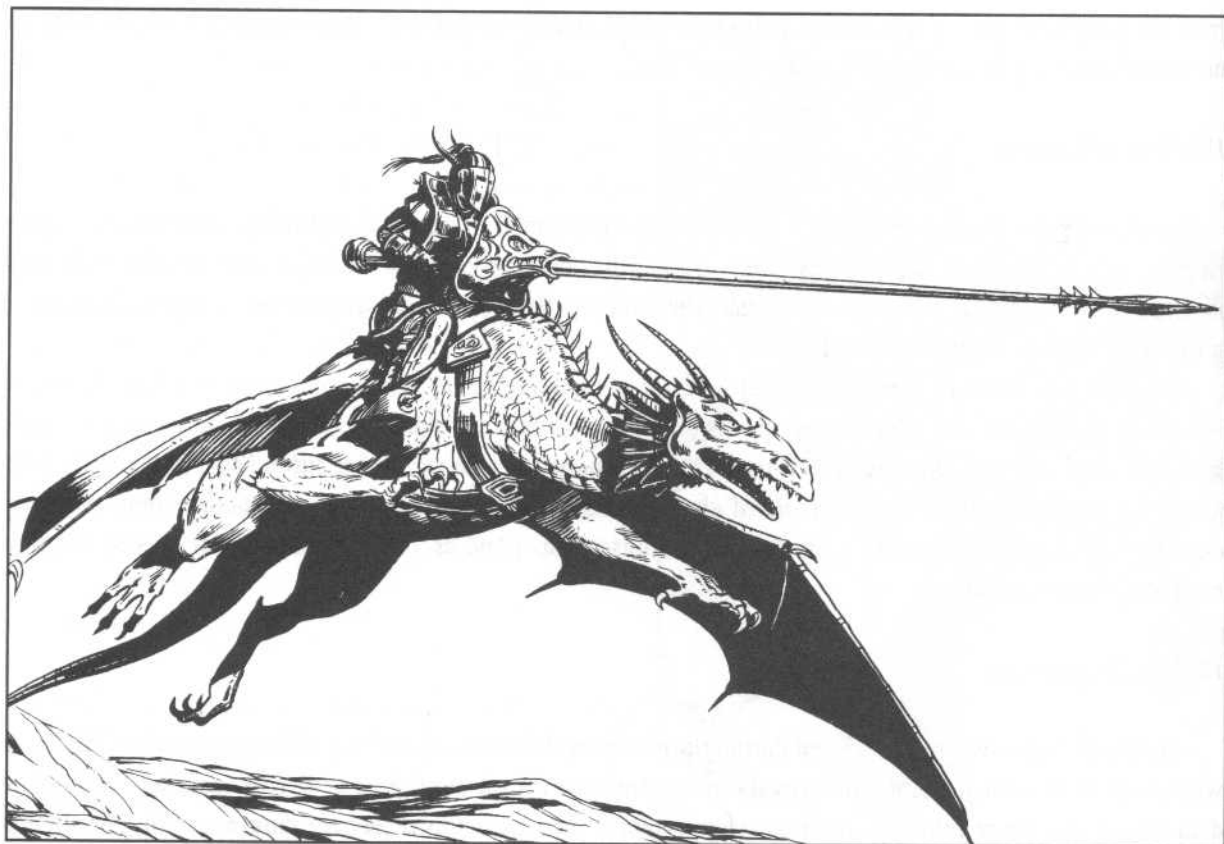
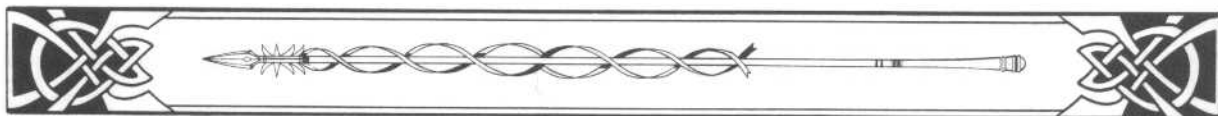
The Dragonlance was first employed during the attack on the Tower of the High Clerist. Several mighty blues were lured with a magical orb, then cruelly massacred. My initial reaction was to order caution, to urge my dragons not to venture into any situation where ambush was a possibility. For the duration of that battle this tactic was sufficient to avoid further casualties.

However, within weeks the dragons of metal entered the conflict, bearing riders who wielded bigger and longer variations of the lethal spear. The barbed head (of both footman and mounted varieties) is forged from the hardest steel we have ever encountered. The edge remains keen as a razor, even after repeated strikes against armored enemies, and the prongs inflict savage wounds if the tip is so much as scraped along a dragon's scales. Indeed, the pernicious weapon is so designed as to rip those scales away, revealing the vulnerable flesh underneath. When backed by the charging mass of a mighty serpent, the lancehead inevitably plunges deep, inflicting horrendous wounds.

The shaft of the Dragonlance appears to be mundane timber, albeit of a particularly tough variety—vallenwood, perhaps? Somehow, in the course of the forging, this beam is imbued with unnatural strength, rendered virtually unbreakable. Even if the barb is lodged fatally within a heavy dragon, the shafts have proven strong enough for the wielder to yank the weapon free, extracting the precious head.

This lethal spear, Excellency, has had a profound effect not just on the physical health of our serpents, but also upon their morale. Lacking the knowledge to create the deadly heads and magical shafts, our own dragon-mounted lancers have been ruthlessly slain in growing numbers. The situation is reaching the point where even our bravest and strongest wyrms are reluctant to engage in battle against the forces of the Golden General.

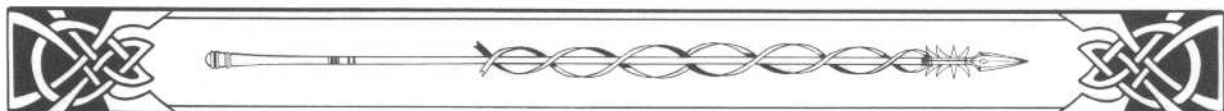




This is not to say that our cause is lost. The intimations you have given me—most particularly regarding the possibility of sending castles aloft to serve as aerial strong-points—suggest that the forces of Whitestone will yet have cause to rue their aggression. Our armies remain numerous, with the losses of the past weeks already wiped away by the hope of fresh recruits and conscripts. However, unless we alter our tactics to meet the new capabilities of our enemy, subsequent campaigns may be doomed to recycle the disastrous mistakes made by several of my subcommanders during the spring. (I assure Your Excellency that these malefactors have been suitably punished.)

I conclude by urging the Emperor to consider these tactical suggestions for future campaigns. There can be no doubt that, with the proper preparation and commitment on the part of our new forces, the reversals of the recent campaigns will prove to be temporary setbacks; in the meantime, I anticipate and prepare for the commencement of the major assault that will lead to our ultimate triumph!

Your Most Loyal Field Commander
Kit



The Journal of Feldspar Oldstone

This curious journal was found in the year 103 A.C., by a shepherd leading his flock to high pasture in the Kharolis Mountains.

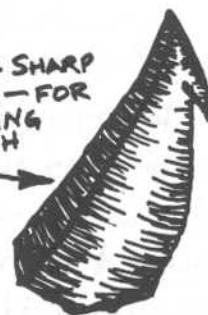
-Astinnus

An Expedition in the Year 57 A.C. Feldspar Oldstone

Solinari Waxing, 3rd Day (Autumn Solstice)

Tomorrow I leave the town of Haven on my latest expedition, hopes high. The fossil tooth I bought from that travelling trader, though fragmentary, displays the telltale barbed cusp. According to the trader (what was her name? Matya?), she gained the tooth from a kender who found it in the Kharolis Mountains. So into the mountains I go—to finally prove that dragons are no myth. How satisfying it will be to return to my home village with the fossil bones of a dragon. Then let the Hill Dwarves of Grayhenge tell me that dragons are only a child's tale!

NOTE SHARP
RIDGE—FOR
PIERCING
FLESH



FROM
LOWER
JAW?

DRAGON TOOTH

Solinari Waxing, 4th Day

Though a few gloomy souls warned against journeying into the mountains in Autumn, the sun shone brightly as we trekked across wood and glade to the foot of the Kharolis range. With me are two companions, met by chance (Fate?) on the road to Haven. The first is Danath Lar, an elven mage with striking blue eyes who happily shares my scientific interest in ancient and extinct life. The second is Kayl Fireleaf, a wild-looking young woman with crimson hair, a ranger by trade. She will be our guide.

Solinari Waxing, 5th Day

Into the mountains. Their sharp-edged beauty defies mere words.

Solinari Waxing, 8th Day

Today a discovery. We have been following the mountains north, searching every gully and vale, but so far without luck. Tonight we camped beneath a sandstone overhang. It wasn't until I lay down that I saw them. Fish! A dozen fossil fish skeletons were embedded in the overhang. They appear to represent a species ~~which~~ currently found only in warm northern waters, suggesting the sea that now pounds upon the shores of Abanasinia was

gentler in the past. Danath was quite interested, but Kayl did not understand how the bones of sea fish could come to rest high in the mountains. I told her my theories ~~about~~ concerning fossilization, which I have been refining in my mind as we journey:

FOSSILIZATION

When an animal dies near water—be it sea or lake or river—its skeleton is often buried beneath thick layers of sand or silt. In time, pressure processes these layers into sediment if conditions are right, the skeleton is buried as well.

THESE SPECIMENS
SEEM SIMILAR TO
KALAMANISH
FIREFISH



and chemical reactions can transform sediment into stone. And, over time, the skeleton becomes stone. This is a process that work

as a fossil. Later, the forces constantly to reshape the world can bring the rocks, once buried deep, back to the surface. There wind and rain erode the rocks, releasing the fossils inside. Of course, the Cataclysm ~~was~~ caused far swifter change to the landscape than were natural processes. In moments, mountains were drowned beneath the ocean and sea beds thrust skyward. I suspect these fish

fossils are a small reminder of that terrible conflagration. May Krynn never see its likes again!

Solinari at High Sanction, 2nd Day

We have fallen into a rhythm on our journey. While Danath and I search one vale for fossils, Kayl scouts the next for signs of danger. Yesterday she ~~was~~ espied a band of goblins. Goblins are not picky eaters, and they would think dwarf, elf, or human a fine ~~addition~~ addition to their stewpot. Needless to say, we avoided that valley. In camp Kayl keeps to herself, but Danath and I often engage in lively scholarly debates by the fire. Though Danath does not consider himself a mage, he did study for a time at the Tower of High Sorcery at Wayreth. These days he is consumed by his scientific passions, making the two of us kindred spirits.

Solinari at High Sanction, 3rd Day

It is colder in the mountains than I thought it would be.

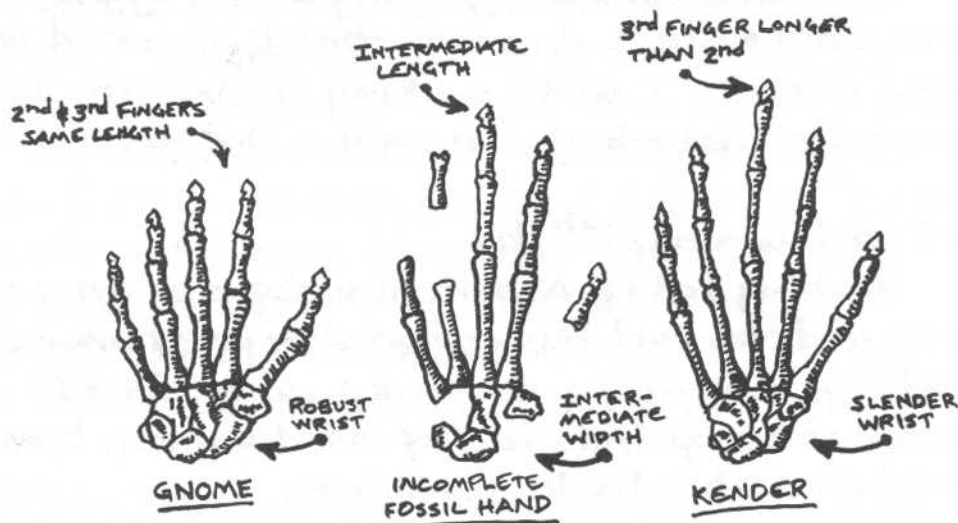
Solinari at High Sanction, 8th Day

After several discouraging days, an intriguing find. With his sharp elven eyes,

Danath spotted a scattering of bones eroding from a mudstone outcrop. By the variegated colors of the sediments, I surmise they were deposited on a lush river floodplain, though the strata now sit atop a barren plateau. Carefully, I collected the bones and fit them together. It was a hand. At first I thought the bones to be those of a kender, but when I studied them I saw traits that were more gnomish in appearance. I am now convinced that this hand belonged to a creature that was neither kender nor gnome, but something in between...

A THEORY CONCERNING THE GRAYGEM

Long ago, in the Age of Dreams, only mundane animals and a few intelligent races — elves, humans, ogres — inhabited Kryn. But



when the Graygem, forged by the god Reorx, was loosed upon the world, it caused great changes in many of Krynn's creatures, transforming them into new forms. Thus came into being griffons, kobolds, hobgoblins, kender, and (some dare say) dwarves. Myth tells that these changes were instantaneous. Yet scholars agree that the Age of Dreams was of unimaginably long duration. Perhaps the changes wrought by the Graygem occurred gradually, over many, many generations. The fossil hand, intermediate between gnome and kender, supports this idea. I will have to ~~give~~ give this interesting theory more thought.

Solinari at High Sanction, 9th Day

The mountains are growing more rugged now. Last night I dreamed that I drowned in a sea of rock. I woke choking for breath. It was quite disturbing, but only a dream.

Solinari Waning, 4th Day

Nothing today. Again. The sky is as gray as steel, and the cold has grown sharper, hungrier. Kayl says it is only going to get worse, but I prefer to be optimistic. My old dwarven bones could do with a little sunshine.

Solinari Waning, 7th Day

Freezing rain all day. We have been forced to take shelter in a cave that Kayl found. Danath has helped while away the dull hours by entertaining us with small magics he learned at Wayreth. He made the bones of an old marmot skeleton dance as if alive. A remarkable trick.

Solinari Waning, 8th Day

Another day in the cave. Kayl has been sharpening her sword with a piece of flint for hours now. The sound of it is beginning to jar my nerves. I wish the rain would end.

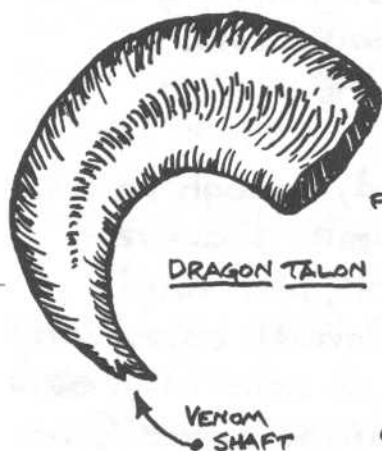
Solinari Waning, 9th Day

At last the storm has passed, though in its wake the air is frigid as a tomb. I am relieved to continue on our trek, but Kayl seems strangely nervous. Danath asked why she had sharpened her sword so carefully. ~~She~~ "You never know when you might come face-to-face with a creature of darkness," she said cryptically, then stared at the elf as if he should know what this odd statement meant. Had the dream once more last night. A hideous sensation—drowning in stone.

Solinari at Low Sanction, 2nd Day

Finally, a breakthrough! I found it on the bank of a half-frozen stream as I was bending down to drink. It is broken and weathered, but the shape is exactly like that I once saw in an old drawing in the Great Library of Palanthas. This can only be one thing: the fossil talon of a dragon. The claw is compressed and sickle-shaped—clearly this was a tool designed for no other purpose than to rake bellies and slice flesh—and there is a hollow shaft in the tip for

carrying venom, just as I had always theorized there would be. What I had not expected was its sheer size. The



talon is enormous, nearly the length of my forearm. I can only imagine the terrible grandeur of the

beast that once wielded it. The deposits in this canyon are not fossiliferous. Thus the claw must have washed down from the highlands above. Tomorrow we will journey upstream, in hope of finding the source of the fossil talon.

Solinari at Low Sanction, 4th Day

After two days of scrambling over volcanic outcrops, we have reached an area where the mountains are formed of sedimentary rocks - rocks that could contain fossils. Difficult to ~~write~~ write tonight. The cold is a ravenous thing. Yet we must press ~~on~~ on. I am certain we are close now.

Solinari at Low Sanction, 5th Day

Disaster. Kayl wants to turn back. She thinks we are fools to go on, that the winter snows will trap us. Yet I cannot give up, not now. Kayl threatened to take what is left of the food and start back tomorrow, with or without us. She said this with her hand on her sword. What am I going to do?

Solinari at Low Sanction, 6th Day

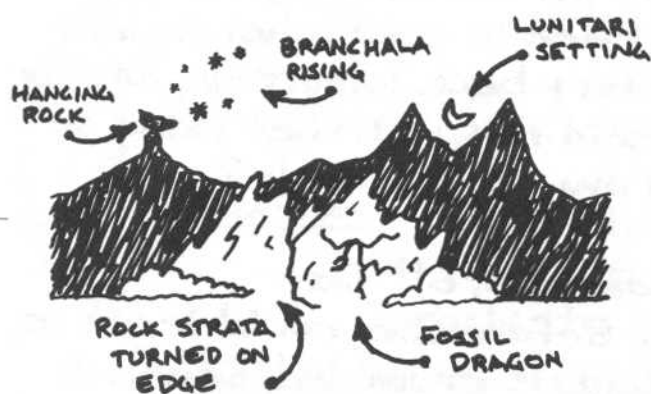
Kayl is dead. Before she could leave us, the edge of a precipice crumbled beneath her foot, and she fell to the rocks a thousand feet below. I did not see this gruesome tragedy unfold, but Danath did. Perhaps Kayl was right. Perhaps we are fools. But Danath is ever encouraging in his talk. We will press on. I am grateful beyond words for the elf's company in these blasted mountains.

Solinari at Low Sanction, 7th Day

The dream again. So real. Yet how can one
drown in rock?

Solinari at Low Sanction, 9th Day

Praise be to Reorx! We have found it at last!
It is beautiful—a complete fossil skeleton em-
bedded in the face of a cliff. A dragon. A great,
glorious dragon. At last I ~~must~~ have my proof.
Dragons did exist! I cannot wait to examine
the skeleton, but I must sketch the fossil and
its position before we disturb it.



The valley—
looking to
the North.

A magnificent
Fossil specimen!



Solinari at Low Sanction, 9th Day—Later

What a fool I have been! What a blind old fool! I saw that a glove had fallen from Danath's pack and bent to pick it up. As I was about to hand the glove to the elf, I realized that it was matted with blood and hair—fire red hair. Despite ~~my~~ my horror, I managed to shove the glove into a pocket before Danath saw. Alas, poor Kayl! Now the elf has returned to the cliff, and I must join him before he grows suspicious. All morning, as we ~~clear~~ cleared off the dragon skeleton, Danath was muttering over the bones. Now I think that he has been whispering spells over the fossil. But to what evil purpose? All I can think of is the way he made those marmot bones dance in the cave. Regardless, it is clear that he has only been using me to get to this place. And now that we are here, he will surely dispose of me as he did the ranger. Somehow ~~I~~ I must find a way to stop the elf first. Reorx help me.

Feldspar was an idiot to think he could stop me. Now he is an example of that which he so dearly loved. In mere moments, when the dark moon Nuitai rises above the mountains, I will make my ~~last~~ assault on the Tower of Wayreth. Then Par-Salian and

those other fools will be sorry they cast me out. They will see I was right, that we must all change our robes to Black if we are to survive the coming conflagration.

Are these dark stains ink or blood?

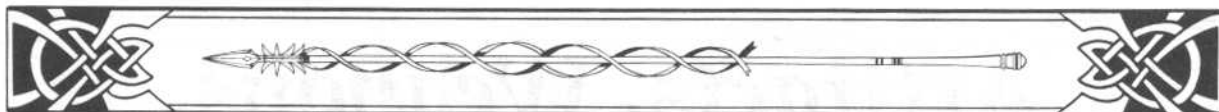
-A.

In the year 157 A.C., with the aid of this journal, one of Feldspar's descendants searched for and found the cliff described herein, though much of it appeared to have exploded outward in a spray of rubble. One fossil was found in the cliff face, but it was not a dragon. It was the skeleton of a dwarf, curiously modern in appearance considering the ancient rocks in which it was embedded.

-Astinus

Artifacts, Weapons and Spells





The Obsidian Chest

This artifact is a six-sided chest made of black volcanic glass (obsidian) with intricate etchings and glyphs on the lid and a narrow band of glyphs and runes along the outside rim of the sides. The six surfaces are not permanently joined, but slide together to form the Chest. When separated, the pieces cannot be harmed, but they have no other power.

It is only when the six pieces are joined and the proper ritual performed that the Chest's magic becomes apparent.

The History

In the First Age, the three gods—Paladine, Takhisis, and Gilean—created the Chest when their helpers requested tools to aid them in the creation of the world. The three gods were aware of the other planes of existence and imbued the Chest with the ability to summon objects of power from those other realities. They attuned the Chest to the summoner, so that the artifact withdrawn would suit him or her.

The first to make use of the Chest was Reorx, who drew forth his mighty hammer, which he used to forge the world. Its likeness is etched on the lid of the Chest even to this day, as is the likeness of every artifact drawn from the Chest.

In the beginning of the Age of Dreams, Gilean realized that, unchecked, the Chest might well upset the Balance of the World. Thus, he enchanted the Chest so that a very specific ritual must be performed to make use of its power. He encrypted the instructions for the ritual along the rim of the Chest's lid, and the keys to the cipher on the lid. Furthermore, the enchantment is such that when an artifact is pulled from it, the six sides of the Chest are scattered to the winds.

He thereby ensured that a great deal of time would pass before the six pieces could once again be assembled and the ritual be deciphered and performed.

And indeed, his plan worked, for the Chest has only been assembled six times since the Age of Dreams. Few detailed accounts still exist, but legends and rumors can be found if one looks hard enough. Here are four stories that may or may not be true:

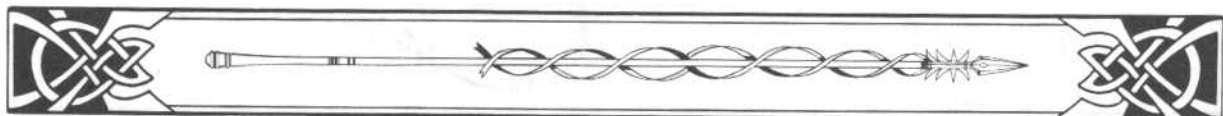
The Staff of Magius

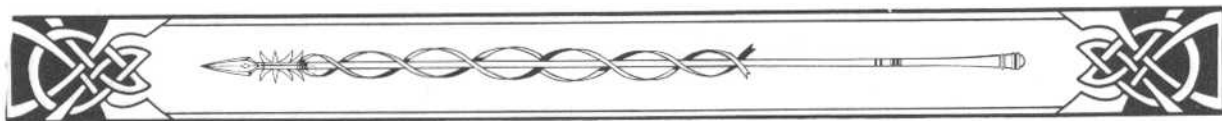
In the Time of Light, as the elves prepared to war with the dragons, Branchala realized they needed help and so delivered unto his favored children the lid of the Obsidian Chest. After studying the object for fifteen years, Shadra, a sorceress in the house of Silvanos, gathered a group of adventurous elves and set off on a quest for the other five pieces of the Chest.

Twenty years passed before they discovered, in the mountain lands of the ogres, that the clan of Ogga-kan held the bottom of the Chest. A barbarous and cruel clan, the ogres worshiped the piece of obsidian as a totem of their god, sacrificing enemies to it in a bizarre and disturbing ceremony.

In an attempt to spirit away the piece while the ogres slept, the elves were discovered by a late-arriving hunter who, upon stumbling over the body of a dead guard, alerted the rest of the clan. A mighty battle ensued that cost the elves one of their number, but Shadra's magic wiped the clan of Ogga-kan from the face of Krynn.

It was twenty years before Shadra located another one of the Chest's sections among the humans who, not knowing what they had, thought they drove a hard bargain in trading it for one hundred gold pieces. It was difficult for the sorceress to keep a straight face during the negotiations.





Shadra then discovered that another piece of the Chest was to be found among the gnomes. For the past four fruitless generations, one gnome family's Life Quest had been to uncover the properties of the piece of obsidian and come up with some purpose for it. Unfortunately, they could not decipher the glyphs, find any way to damage or mark the obsidian, or invent any use for it other than as an object of art. Then the elves arrived.

Committed to his Life Quest, the current gnome holder of the piece would not relinquish it, but the elves were prepared for this eventuality. Shadra had brought with her an ordinary piece of obsidian and, after spending a pleasant evening in the company of the gnome, she magically created a reasonable facsimile of the gnome's side of the Chest. During the night, an elven thief slipped into the gnome's workroom and swapped the pieces.

The next day the gnome entered his workroom, picked up his favorite hammer and struck the piece of obsidian as he had done once a day for the last thirty years, as had his father and grandfather before him. To his utter shock, the piece shattered into a thousand pieces.

He proceeded to write a scholarly paper for the *Geologists Journal* that to his great delight was also published in the *Jewelers Journal*, detailing that after exactly one hundred fifteen years, seven months, and twenty-three days, obsidian, which was otherwise known to be unbreakable, will break. His new Life Quest was to study the six thousand fragments to determine if one of them had different properties from the other five thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine.

After searching for thirty more years, Shadra could find mention of only one more side of the Chest. The dragons had it, or rather, one dragon in particular had it: Bargoth, a red dragon. His hoard, it was said, was immense and jealously guarded.

The elves were filled with dread at the thought of attempting to retrieve this piece, but they had no choice. The war was going badly for the elves, and they desperately needed help. Gathering their courage, the elves made their way cautiously to the mountain where Bargoth made his home. They waited patiently for him to leave his lair, and then rushed in to find the piece and leave before he returned.

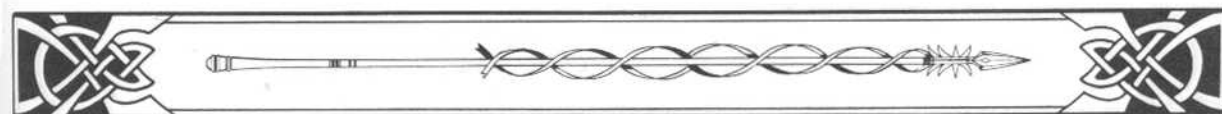
Shadra herself had just uncovered the Chest's side when Bargoth came back, enraged to find intruders in his lair. Shadra was forced to lay down the piece of obsidian in order to perform her magic, and three elves were killed. But the section of Chest was retrieved, and the remaining elves, fighting for their lives, escaped into the natural passageways that twisted through Bargoth's mountain. They shortly became lost.

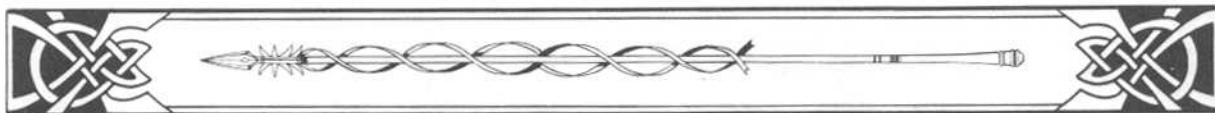
Unable to find their way out of the labyrinthine tunnels, Shadra was grieved at having lost so many, all for naught—she still lacked the last side of the Chest.

Hearing the great wyrm searching for them, Shadra called out to Branchala for aid. He heard her plea and delivered to them the final piece of the Chest.

Shadra quickly performed the ritual. Just as the dragon found them, she drew forth from the Chest a magical staff. All fatigue fled from her body as she lifted the staff and teleported the remaining party to safety beyond Bargoth's mountain.

With the newfound staff, Shadra was instrumental in holding off the dragons until the gods of magic gave the dragon stones to the elves. Sadly, she died in the First Dragon War, but her staff survived and was passed down through the years to only the mightiest of wizards, including Magius, who fought at Huma's side and for whom the staff was named, and most recently Raistlin Majere, the Master of Past and Present.





The Dread Axe of Antioth

In the early years of the Birth of Nations, a sage in the employ of Wylan, the High Priest of Gilean in Istar, discovered a scroll detailing the origins of a powerful elven staff. He read an account of the Obsidian Chest.

Realizing the Chest's potential for both good and evil, the High Priest, in the greatest of secrecy, commanded his monks to search for any mention of a flat, rune-covered piece of obsidian. It is fortunate that the kindly Wylan did not live to see the fruits that his project bore.

It took ten years, but finally a monk uncovered mention in an old trade journal of a square piece of black glass that was said to have been discovered by the dwarves of Thorbardin. It was recorded that the glass had unusual resistance to any kind of damage, and had faint, mysterious etchings along one edge. The dwarves had apparently traded it away as a curiosity.

It took the monks nearly thirty years to track down that one piece, but they managed to find it hanging on the mantel of a retired adventurer. The adventurer was persuaded to relinquish the piece, and it was returned to Istar for further study.

No one could decipher the etchings, so the monks recruited Antioth, a young priest known for his brilliance with languages, both mundane and holy. Unfortunately, the monks of Gilean did not know that Antioth secretly worshiped the dread god, Morgion.

Once the monks had found the first piece, the project's pace seemed to accelerate. It took only another forty years to find the remaining five pieces. It was forty years of unending frustration for Antioth, however. He could make nothing of the runes until the final piece, the lid, was recovered. Then he was finally able to decipher the etchings and learn the secrets of the Chest's ritual.

The night he translated the final glyph, Antioth performed the ritual alone. He drew forth from the Chest a gleaming, red-tinted battle-axe. No one is certain what this axe was supposed to do. All that is known is that it was a weapon of evil of such power and might that it drove Antioth insane, causing him to go on a murderous rampage through the temple.

A few monks escaped to tell the tale and warn the city of Antioth's madness. Eight wizards and a platoon of Solamnic knights did battle with Antioth for a day and a night before they were able to bring him down. What became of his terrible axe is unknown.

The Wheel of Rondor

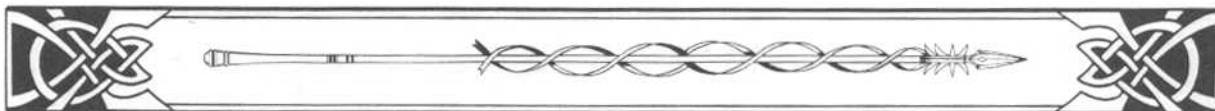
In an amazing coincidence, in the year 1952 PC in the Time of Knights, the very same side of the Chest that had been stolen from the gnomes by Shadra appeared on the workbench of one Rondor, a gnome who claimed to be a direct descendent of the Rondor who had invented the wheel—an octagonal device that was intended to have been a flower box but, when accidentally rolled down a hill, was noticed by a passing human who copied, perfected, and claimed credit for the invention himself.

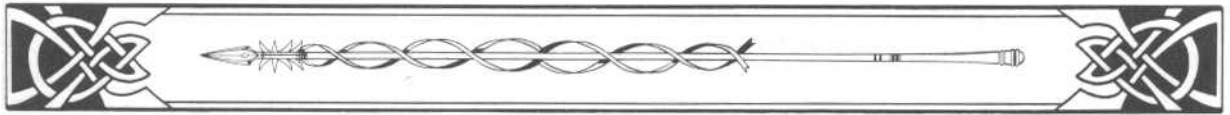
Rondor immediately showed the side of the Chest to his family's Guild subcommittee, which at once put Rondor to work researching and studying the strange item. In an unusual display of competence, Rondor took only ten years to uncover the records regarding the smashing of the pieces of obsidian and subsequent article in the *Jewelers Journal*.

He set the object to the side for exactly one hundred fifteen years, seven months, and twenty-three days. On that day, Rondor struck the obsidian with a hammer.

Nothing happened.

He tried again, swinging the hammer with all his might, and ended up with only a dented hammer. He decided his ancient colleague must have been off by a day or two and returned to strike the





obsidian every day for two years before he finally decided that something must be different about this piece of obsidian.

Seated in a tavern one evening, Rondor overheard an elven bard singing “The Song of Shadra” (a song lost to modern times). Completely tone-deaf, the gnome didn’t think much of the song and left before the end.

The blasted song stuck in his head, however. It took Rondor another two months—rather a short time for a gnome—to realize that he might have one piece of the Obsidian Chest from the song. He passed his work along to the next Rondor.

Generation after generation of Rondors traveled all over Krynn in search of the pieces of the Chest, and in thirteen generations, they finally managed to assemble it. It took another two generations to decipher the glyphs and reconstruct the ritual.

On that grand day, Rondor the Umpteenth performed the ritual, reached into the Chest, and pulled forth a strange, torus-shaped device with a metal center surrounded by a soft, unknown material laced with grooves and patterns like the skin of a reptile. The Rondors study this device even to this day.

They have no idea what it does, but they’re working on it.

Argon’s Weapon

Sometime in the Shadow Years, a young Knight of Solamnia being pursued by a mob took refuge in a cavern. There he stumbled across the lid of the Obsidian Chest. Gifted in languages and in legends, the knight, whose name was Argon, deciphered some of the glyphs and realized the treasure he had found.

Hoping to restore Solamnia to its former glory, Argon secretly recruited a group of knights and began a quest for the rest of the Chest. Investigating a rumor, they found one of the sides deep within Huma’s tomb. This seemed to them a blessing from Paladine on their quest, and so they continued.

A few years later, they heard of a captain in the minotaur fleet who had an indestructible breastplate, reputed to be black, shiny, and marked with strange runes. Convinced that this was a piece of the Chest, the knights devised a plan to retrieve it. Having learned of minotaur customs in the Library of Palanthas, the knights made a daring and dangerous voyage to the minotaur homeland. In the Circus, Argon challenged the captain—one Torgus—for the breastplate.

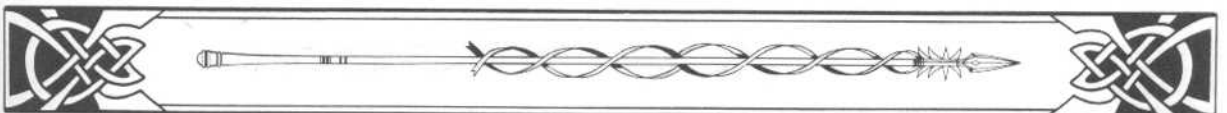
Impressed by the knights’ daring and the fact that they were abiding by minotaur customs, the emperor allowed the challenge, fully intending to destroy the entire party once the minotaur captain had won and Argon was dead. The emperor was well rewarded by his decision, however, as he was witness to a spectacular battle.

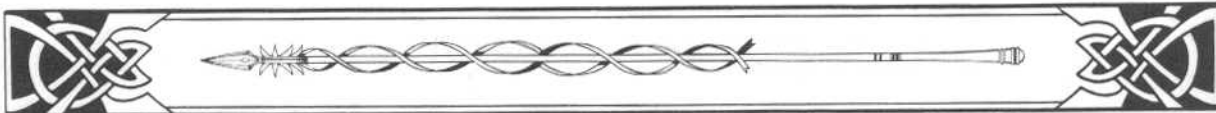
Argon and Torgus were well matched, fighting with swords in the Circus for over an hour with neither gaining significant advantage. Finally, Argon managed to get in a solid blow to Torgus’s head. Stunned, the minotaur dropped to his knees. Argon beheaded the minotaur in a single blow.

The minotaurs cheered wildly, for even though they had lost one of their own, strength had prevailed, and they respected Argon.

Knowing that the emperor’s goodwill could be short-lived, Argon took the breastplate from Torgus’s body, and the knights made a quick departure from the Circus. The minotaurs allowed the party to reach their ship before giving chase. Fortunately, the knights were able to escape to friendlier waters. The minotaurs gave up the pursuit, which had been done mostly to appease Torgus’s relatives.

The knights spent the next twelve years searching for other sides of the Chest, but could find no trace of them. Their morale low, Argon decided to travel to the one place on Ansalon where almost anything





could be found—the Bazaar at Hylo. It is said that if you have lost something valuable, it will eventually turn up at the Bazaar.

Argon searched the enormous Bazaar for two weeks, bribing people for information. After numerous small adventures, he finally found what he sought, hanging on the wall of a kender stone carver's booth. (This is what the kender claimed he was, although Argon, having never heard of a kender stone carver, had his suspicions.) Argon casually inquired about other works the kender had for sale, but the kender kept referring to the obsidian and calling it "his finest work." After some tricky haggling, Argon managed to purchase the piece for two hundred gold pieces, to the immense delight of the kender.

As Argon was leaving to get the money, the kender mentioned that if the knight liked the piece, the kender had another, as yet unfinished, that he would part with for half that price. The kender ducked into the back of the booth for a moment and returned with the bottom of the Chest! Trying to keep his excitement under control, Argon was able to knock ten gold pieces off the price. He paid the kender and quickly left Hylo.

The knights now had five pieces, but they were completely at a loss as to where the last side might be. They had heard no tale, no rumor, not even a whisper about another piece. Sitting around the campfire one evening, one of the knights had an idea.

"We've tried every race on Ansalon except one—the gully dwarves."

The knights were silent for a moment as they absorbed this idea. It simply hadn't occurred to them to look among the gully dwarves. As most people of Ansalon often did, they had unconsciously dismissed the simple folk without even considering them.

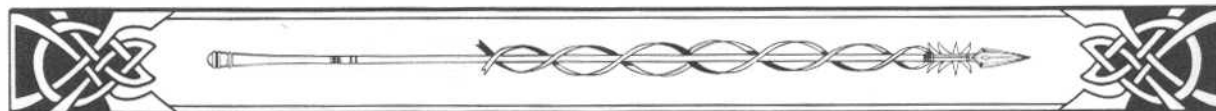
The knights spent the next six years traveling from one gully dwarf community to another, and they almost missed the piece of the Chest when they found it. The head of the local clan was using it as a door-mat ("Good mat. Very strong."). He was, however, willing to trade the mat for some brightly colored rags and, because of the Measure, the knights paid to the gully dwarf the same sum they had paid to the kender. The last they saw, the gully dwarf chieftain was tossing the gold pieces into his stew pot, apparently thinking them some type of vegetable.

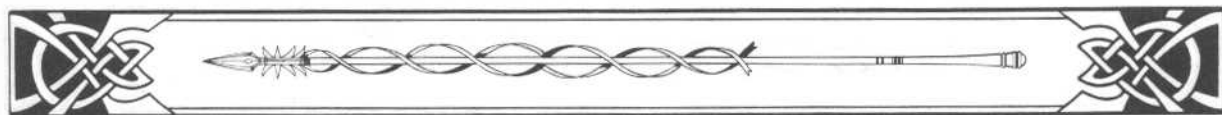
The knights returned home to Solamnia. Working in secret, they assembled the Chest and performed the ceremony. With luminescent magical energies swirling around him, Argon reached in and pulled forth what appeared to be nothing more than a misshapen hunk of silvery metal. The Chest vanished.

Argon examined the metal object for days, but try as he might, he was unable to discern its function. Bitterly disappointed and depressed, thinking that a cheap iron sword would have been more useful, he tossed the object onto a refuse heap. The object suddenly transformed into a glittering long sword. Taking this as a sign that the knighthood would emerge from dark times newly forged and shining, Argon reverently picked up the sword.

Practicing with his fellows, he found that the blade was marvelously balanced, could cut anything, never lost its edge, and even afforded some protection to the wielder.

Argon, wielding the sword, set out with his companions to restore the good name of the Solamnic Knights. Although they were unsuccessful in this endeavor during their lifetimes, Argon fought courageously in the Dwarfgate Wars. What happened to him and the blade after that is not known.





The Eagle Bow of Justin Hughes

Justin Hughes was a solitary man. He lived by himself in the Vingaard Mountains, far, far from civilization. He made do for himself, growing food in a small garden, making his meals of fish caught from the mountain streams. In the winter, he lived off what he had put aside during the summer and what he made from selling baskets that he wove himself and that were marvels of workmanship.

Justin was not fond of people—one reason he avoided them. No one knew exactly what had turned him against his own human race. Some said it was because the soldiers of the Kingpriest had dragged off his mother, accusing her of being a witch. Others said it was because his father had been stoned to death for practicing the arcane arts. Still others said it was “just Justin’s way.”

Then came the Cataclysm. Justin’s house tumbled down around his ears, but he was used to the ferocious vagaries of nature and thought nothing of it. He built his house again and spent the rest of the year helping those animals who had been injured in the quakes and fires.

A man of simple faith, Justin continued to worship the gods, his favorite being Chislev. It never occurred to him to blame them for the calamity that had befallen. That year, when he made his semiannual sojourn into town to sell his baskets, Justin was astounded to hear talk of the gods having deserted mankind. He didn’t say much, but what he did say in defense of the gods angered the townspeople. They drove him from the town with sticks and rocks, told him never to return.

Hurt and bleeding from where a rock had hit him in the head, Justin trekked back up the mountain. His main concern was how he would get through the winter without starving. He was making a slow go of walking, for his head ached and he was dizzy. Rounding a bend, he came upon a woman, dressed all in green, seated on a tree stump. He stopped and eyed her suspiciously.

“Well met, Justin Hughes,” said the woman. “How are you faring?”

“I’ve been better,” Justin muttered, wondering who this woman was and how she knew him.

“I can’t stay long, Justin Hughes,” the woman said, rising to her feet. “I’m not supposed to be here at all, if the truth be told. But I wanted to warn you never to go back to town again. You’re right, and they’re wrong, and they know they’re wrong and they know you’re right. Which means they’ll hate you forever for being right. If you go back, they’ll kill you.”

Now, this was too much for Justin’s aching head.

“I thank you for your warning, Lady,” Justin growled, not too politely, “but I’m likely to die if I *don’t* go back. I need food to get through the winter.”

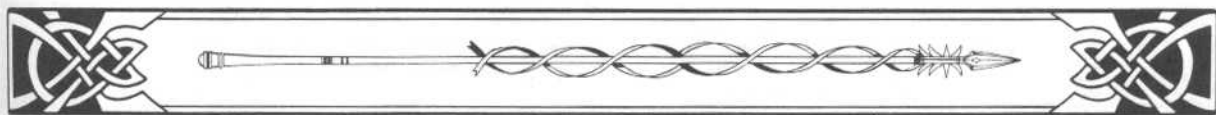
“Use this bow, Justin Hughes,” the woman said, and she presented him with a very fine bow and a quiver of very strange-looking arrows. “And use these arrows, and you will never starve, so long as you live.”

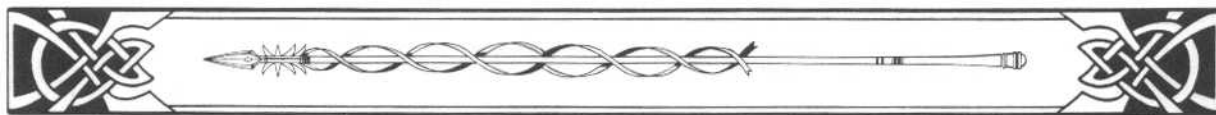
The woman handed him a basketful of apples. “Share these and you will never run out.”

She turned and walked smack into a tree and disappeared, which was the first inkling Justin had that he might have been talking to a goddess. He took the bow and arrows and apples and went home.

Justin wasn’t much of a shot with a bow, and he was dubious about this helping him. He set the bow aside and forgot about it.

Winter set in, one of the hardest, cruelest, most severe winters that had ever been known in the land. The streams and lakes froze solid. Food was scarce, not only for Justin but for the animals, too. Starving wolves and foxes crept to his door, begging like dogs. Bears, who hadn’t been able to fill their bellies





during the fall, woke up hungry and came to visit Justin. Deer crept from the forest, so hungry that even the sight of the wolves didn't deter them.

Sure enough, the basket of apples the woman had given Justin was always full, no matter how many he ate, so long as he spread most of them out on the snow for those animals who ate fruit. His grain supply lasted far longer than he would have ever thought possible, too. But he needed meat, and so did the meat-eaters among the animals, who—respecting Justin's wishes—had nobly refrained from attacking those animals who sought Justin's help.

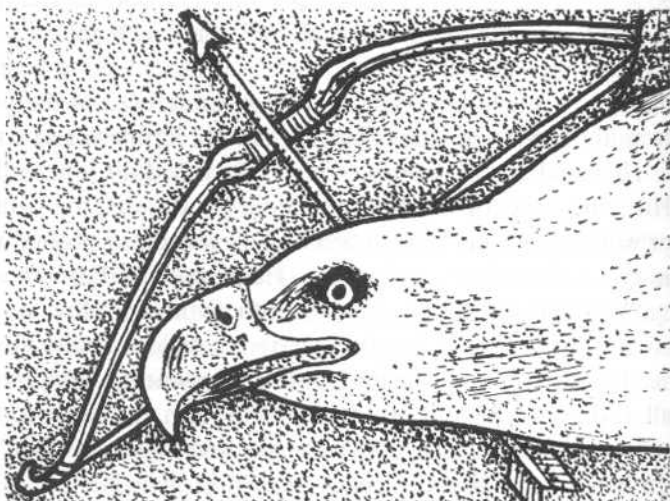
This was certainly a marvelous miracle, and Justin appreciated it fully, at least he would have if he hadn't been so hungry and cold.

It was then Justin remembered his bow and arrows. He took up the bow, slung the quiver of arrows over his shoulder, and waded out into the snow. No one had seen so much as a mouse in these parts for months, let alone a rabbit for the stew pot. Justin wasn't surprised to not find anything and he wondered what good a god-given bow would do if he couldn't find meat to shoot at. He finally decided that he might as well get in a little target practice while he was here—at least sharpen his aim in case he ever did see any game.

He fired an arrow at a tree. To his vast astonishment, the arrow changed into an eagle and flew out of sight. Justin took out another arrow, fired it, and the same thing happened. The arrow sprouted wings and a tail and the head and sharp beak and talons of an eagle and it flew away. Justin fired all six arrows. Six eagles flapped off over the horizon.

Taking the now useless bow with him, he headed back to the cabin.

The next morning, he woke to the call of eagles. Justin went to the door. There, spread out on the snow, were six fine salmon. Next to each salmon lay an arrow.

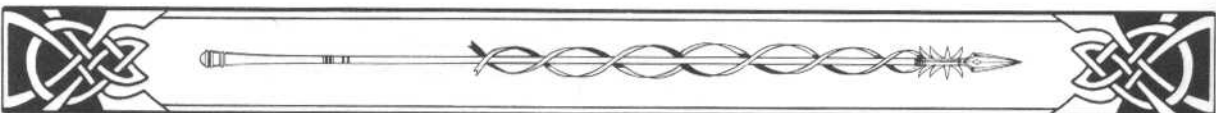


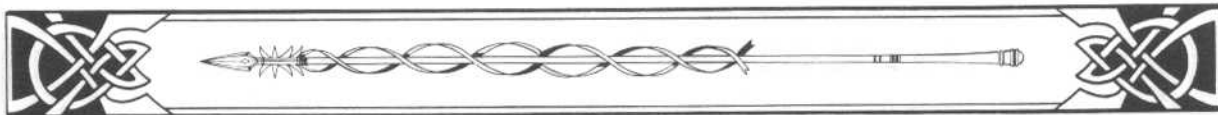
Justin fed himself and the animals all that winter and the next winter and the next after that. He never again went to the town. He kept his faith in the gods, particularly Chislev, whom he never failed to honor over each meal.

When Justin died, the animals held a vigil to honor him. Bears and wolves, foxes and deer, rabbits and birds of all types traveled hundreds of miles to pay him tribute. They sat in rows around his cabin and mourned, their sad howls and wails filling the air. The bears pushed his cabin down, so that its friendly logs formed a cairn over his body.

During the years of darkness following the Cataclysm, animals never let anyone come near Justin's resting place. But now, if those who believed in Chislev were to go searching for Justin's cabin, they might be permitted to find it.

They might be permitted to make use of the wonderful bow and the six arrows that change themselves into eagles once per day, and either bring food to their owner or defend the owner against attack.





Solamnic Heraldry



**Family Crest
of Justice Steelheart
Knight of the Rose**

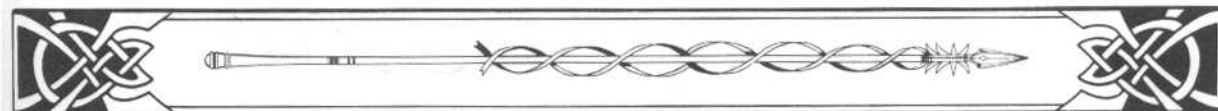
Sealed inside the coffer was an immense book, bound in leather and decorated with gold leaf. The title, in Solamnic, translated roughly as *An Illustrated Guide to the Roster of Loyalty*. It seems certain that this guidebook is perhaps a companion volume to *The Measure*, the set of thirty-seven 300-page law books that define knightly conduct. One of the books of *The Measure*, *The Roster of Loyalty*, includes illustrations of the heraldic crests (distinctive designs on shield shapes) associated with some of the knights. The newly discovered *Illustrated Guide* delineates the rules of design of the ancient heraldic crests.

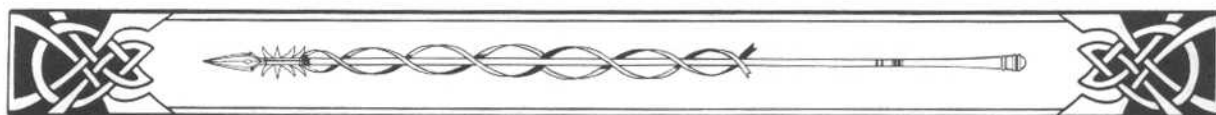
Initially, *only* the Knights of the Rose could register a heraldic crest in *The Roster of Loyalty*. This rule was made in the ancient days of Kryn timer when only the ruling class, who were of royal blood, possessed such crests. Ancient nobles often placed their distinctive shield-shaped crest on their coaches, castle doors, or even on rings used to seal letters with wax, in order to identify their high positions to others.

When the knighthood was formed long ago, *The Measure* had a strict and unyielding rule that only men of the ruling houses could join the highest order of knighthood, and possession of an ancient family crest went a long way toward asserting the knight's royal claim. Then, once a knight had proven he was of royal blood, and had passed the required tests, his distinctive crest would be recorded in *The Roster of Loyalty* as a symbol that he had achieved the privileged status of Knight of the Rose.

Today a Knight of the Rose need not prove that his family is of royal blood. Further, it is fashionable for all orders of the knighthood (Crown, Sword, and Rose) to develop distinctive knightly crests. Thus, *The Illustrated Guide* is useful to knights of all three orders struggling to attain the ancient dignity that a Solamnic crest imparts.

The Background Shape. The most important part of the crest is the shield on which is displayed various symbols representing a knight. In battle, many different shapes of shields are employed by the





knights. But when designing a Solamnic coat of arms to be displayed in *The Roster of Loyalty* only one shape is permitted. The reason behind this is unity. Since the knighthood is a body of men unified by purpose, so it was decided long ago that all knights would use the same standard shield shape when their crests were displayed side-by-side in *The Roster of Loyalty*.

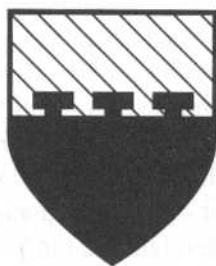
The blank shield shape is often referred to as the field. Originally, it was the standardized shield shape alone that denoted a royal family. Then, in order to differentiate between nobles, distinctive designs were drawn on the field. Today, of course, the field is always decorated, sometimes with complex designs.

The Foreground Decoration. Decorating this shield are various colors, patterns, and symbols or flora and fauna. Rather than go into depth on the hundreds of possible combinations, I'll summarize the general trends and explain what decorations are explicitly prohibited by The Measure. Anyone requiring more elaborate explanations is referred to the guidebook itself, which is currently housed in the Great Library of Palanthas.

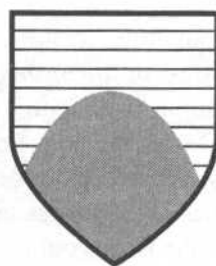
Colors. In Solamnic heraldry, the colors used on crests are divided into two categories: metals and hues. The metals of heraldry take their names from the dragons of good: gold, silver, copper, and brass. The traditional heraldic hues take their names from the evil dragons: red, blue, green, and black. Additional colors are sometimes used, but are considered rather untraditional: purple, orange, dark red, and sky blue. Steel helmets and weapons are often depicted as gray. When depicting a shield in black and white, heralds and scribes replaced the colors with patterns of lines and dots.



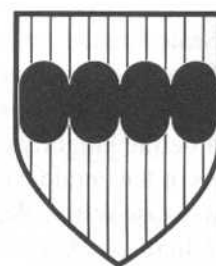
Crest of
Lionel Thornton



Crest of
Geoffrey Beam



Crest of
Augustus Colfax

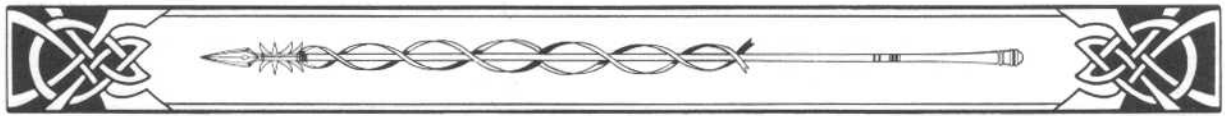


Crest of
Lewis Kar-Thon

Most crests were originally simple shield shapes, differentiated only by color. The traditional colors of the ancient ruling house were gold and black, thus many of Krynn's oldest crests were simple combinations of those two colors. Numerous ways of dividing the field into two colors were devised.

Designs. Later, heraldic crests took on more complicated designs with symbols and such. No symbols representing the gods could be used, such as the silver triangle of Paladine or the blue infinity sign of Mishakal. This rule includes the symbols of the constellations or depictions of the three moons of Krynn. The knights are sworn to honor the gods of good at all times; thus, there exists the prohibition against using the divine symbols. The only exception to this prohibition is the High Clerist. As the highest-ranking Knight of the Sword, the High Clerist may incorporate the symbol of Paladine (silver triangle) or Kiri-Jolith (bison's horns) from whom he receives his powers.





Perhaps the most popular symbols used by the Solamnic Knights are those that resemble interlaced cords or knots. Heraldic knotwork is thought to have evolved from an early depiction of the interlaced gold cord used to wrap the handles of the swords used by the Solamnic Knights in the time of Vinas Solamnus, father of the knighthood. The first crest to depict such a design was that of Joshua Celtis,



**Crest of
Joshua Celtis**



**Crest of
Henry Beaumont**



**Crest of
Edward Thasally**



**Crest of
Adamant Celtis**

so the pattern is commonly referred to as a Celtic design. More and more elaborate designs have been fashioned over the centuries based on the knot theme. In addition to their use on heraldic crests, variations of the Celtic design often appear on Solamnic armor.



**Crest of
Dakin Kolan**



**Crest of
Gunther Amos**



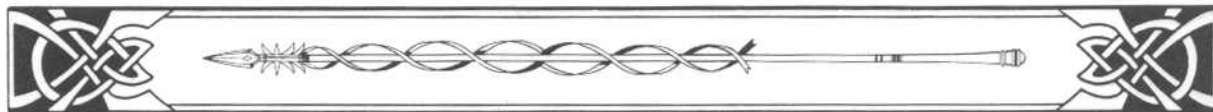
**Crest of
Lovell Delancis**



**Crest of
Hugh Ocre**

Flora and Fauna. Among living things, the kingfisher is a symbol of the knighthood as a whole and cannot be used by individuals on their shields. Evil creatures such as dragons, ogres, and minotaurs are not permitted unless they are depicted as dead, dying, or in pieces. Apparently, there was a superstition centuries ago that the symbols on the Solamnic shield somehow influenced the nature of the bearer. However, as with every rule, exceptions have occasionally cropped up, especially during the time after the Cataclysm when the knighthood went underground and tradition was haphazardly followed. For example, the crest of Hugh Ocre depicts the face of an ogre with its teeth bared.

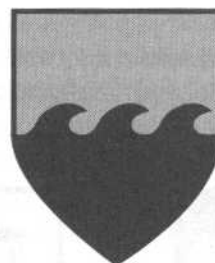




Crest of
Charles Calcord



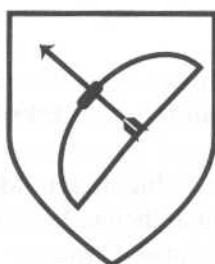
Crest of
William Fletcher



Crest of
Berthold Atwater



Crest of
Helmar Brightblade



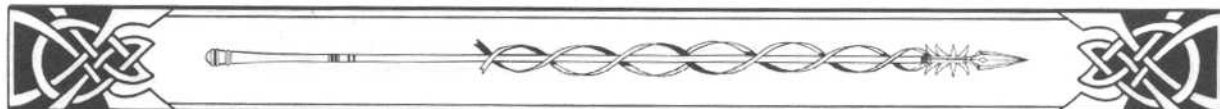
Crest of
Stephan Tallbow

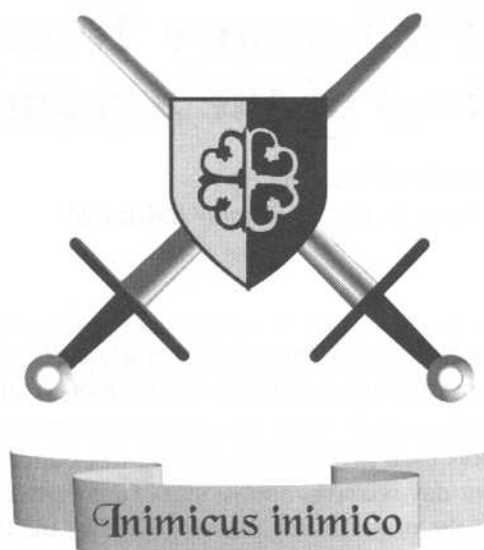
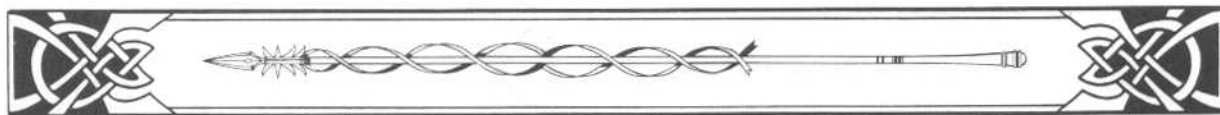


Crest of
Charles Castlemore

Symbols. Sometimes the creator of a crest chose a design or symbol that alluded to his name. For example, the crest of Charles Calcord may at first look like a meaningless shape unless it is realized that his initials, "C.C." are depicted back to back. There have been several knights from the Fletcher family, and each has chosen a variation of the arrow symbol for his crest. Symbols might also be chosen for the location of the knight's estate or home. For example, one Knight of the Crown's shield depicted water because his castle was near the sea. Many ancient Solamnic families derived their last name from their heraldic crest. For example, the Knight of the Crown who lived by the sea came to be known as Berthold Atwater. This is how many Solamnic families came to have strong descriptive last names such as Brightblade, Tallbow and Castlemore.

Background Objects. In addition to the shield, the coat of arms may contain other items such as awards of merit. An award of merit is a symbol or series of symbols that are placed around or behind the shield as an accolade. Once a squire has been admitted to the Order of the Crown, for example, he places his heraldic shield in front of a six-pointed star. A small crown rests beneath it. Knights of the Sword have two swords crossed behind the shield. Knights of the Rose encircle their shield with laurel leaves, with a rose at the juncture of the leaves. Ancient Knight Jon Rosemont's heraldic crest depicted a red rose on a silver field, though we know that Jon was a Knight of the Crown, and not a Knight of the Rose, by the six-pointed star award that surrounds his crest. Similarly, the Knight of the Rose, Derek Crownward had a shield that depicted a crown (as befitting his name) but the award of merit was that of the Rose (as befitting his position in the knighthood).

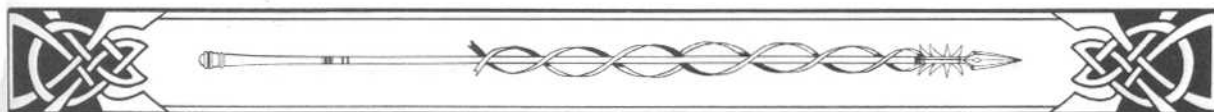


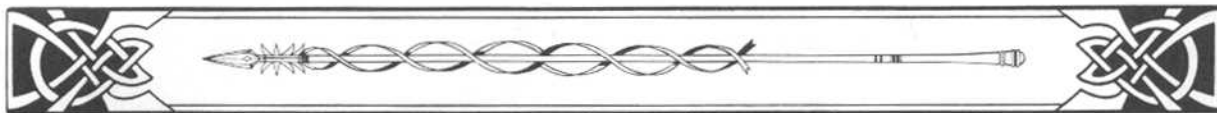


Family Crests of Master Warrior Stoutoak, Knight of the Crown and High Clerist Newcastle, Knight of the Sword

Cadency. Upon entering the knighthood, the knight is expected to design a crest that uniquely represents him. There are no two knightly crests that look exactly the same, even for two knights with the same last name or from the same lineage. However, there have been many occasions where a knight wishes to have a crest similar to that of a father, brother, or ancient ancestor who was also a knight. In those cases, small changes are made in the original design, such as adding a border, slightly altering the color, or adding something new to the field. It is perhaps best to think of the crest as if it were a portrait of the knight himself. While a son's portrait may resemble the portrait of his father, there are bound to be subtle differences that distinguish the two paintings. So it is with the Solamnic crests.

All the aforementioned rules and guidelines were designed to promote individual accomplishment, while still emphasizing unity within the knighthood. As the knighthood enjoys a renaissance of popularity, crests, long recorded in *The Roster of Loyalty*, are again turning up on carriages and castle doors. In the hands of dedicated heralds, the new resurgence of crests will help the knights achieve what they have lacked since the Cataclysm, namely, recognition.





A Preliminary Treatise on the Runes of the Ancient Ogre

submitted by Lyralaranasa

Apprentice to Master Scholar Rekabyral

Carved in the stone above a cracked doorway in the ruins of Takar, scratched into the remains of a doorpost in Bloten, etched in the back of an antique silver bracelet of unsurpassed design and quality. . .

As decorative items, ancient runes appear in a variety of places, are used in a variety of ways. The symbols used in a popular, present-day children's game, even a smattering of the runic symbols used by present-day wizards, almost surely are derivative.

Yet the origin of the markings left by the ancient Ogre civilization that built what are now the magnificent ruins of Takar and Bloten remain shrouded in mystery and history. The aged, crumbling walls of these two cities attest to the fallen greatness of the once High Ogres, to a civilization that might have been given the alphabet of the gods.

Obviously, the ancient runes were used, as they are today, in a variety of ways: to summon blessings, as teaching aids, to foretell the future, perhaps even as purely decorative emblems. The Ogres of today sometimes wear marks that appear to have been gleaned from those of old, crudely scratched and stained onto bark medallions, hanging on leather thongs around their necks.

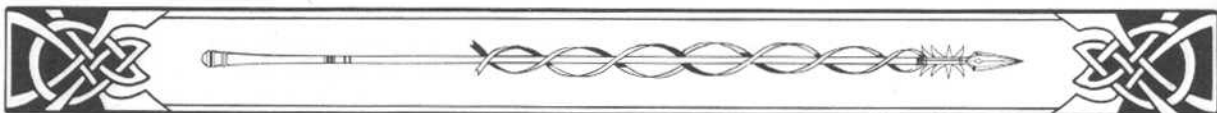
The word "rune" itself, commonly accepted to have its root in a northern word meaning "secret" or "mystery," also bears striking resemblance to "runo irdo," a phrase from the dying Old Ogre language that is generally translated as "whisper of the gods." To date there have been only twenty-one symbols (perhaps one for each of the gods?) discovered, unlike the current twenty-five and thirty-four symbol alphabets of the humans.

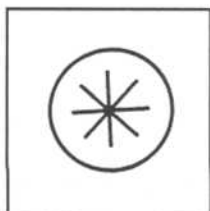
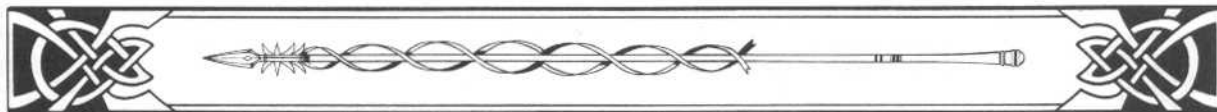
A great advance in the translation of the ancient Ogre runes has come about through the discovery of a "runic verse" that was accompanied by a partial translation in Elvish. Discovered in the forgotten Library of Khrystann in Tarsis, this verse appears to be an ode to a valiant warrior. A preliminary study of the verse dates it to around 3500 P.C., about the time of the First Dragon Wars.

As with any alphabet or language, the ancient meanings are obscured in the haze of the past. But assuming the present-day runes have kinship with these primitive markings, and working with the Ogres* who still inhabit the ruins of Bloten and several other cities of mixed race, the following glossary is tentatively advanced.

*Author's Note: Due to the questionable nature of the information from these sources, a meaning for a symbol was only considered likely after it had been suggested by more than three unrelated individuals. Surprisingly, there is an amazing similarity of interpretation for several of the symbols—such as those for Ogre, thievery, doom, and inheritance, even among the Ogres of Bloten—almost as if there is a "race memory" at work.

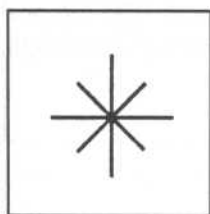
It is also important to keep in mind the hearsay which has come down to us of the society from which these runes came—a world of treachery and thievery, of cold, stone-hearted beings so evil they are believed to have been consumed by their own hungers.





Ogre

This rune stands for "Ogre" or "being," who probably possesses the power of protection. It is universally called "ogro" by the Ogres of today.



Watcher

This symbol is most likely an abstraction of a star, a reference to the beginnings of the universe and the races as they were in the heavens, before being created by the gods. The stars are sometimes called "watchers of the darkness." This rune probably means "beginning," "birth," or "dawn."



Seeker

Interpretations offered for this rune include "travel," "need," and "fate." It also evokes in the Ogres of Bloten a subtler meaning of misery, seeking relief from such and, therefore, a degree of hope.



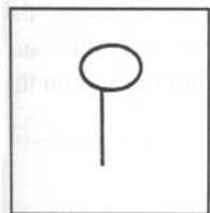
Thief, Thievery

The driving force of "acquisition," and "motivation" and "growth" are included in the various meanings of this rune. By inference, acquisition by the dubious means of stealing would also be included, which is suggested by the symbol's similarity to the mark for "possession" in the most widely-used current runic alphabet.



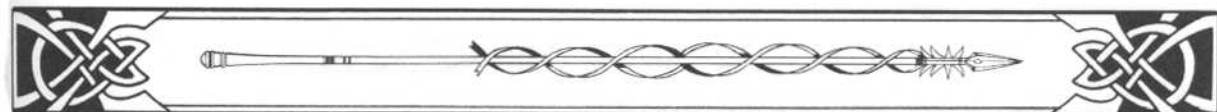
Treachery

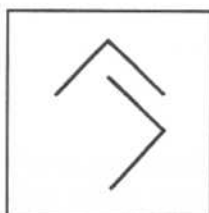
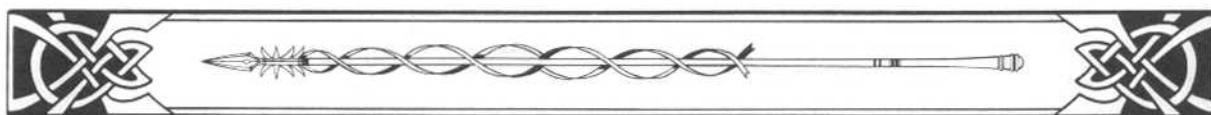
This rune's obvious resemblance to the stylized condor that the followers of Sargonnas favor gives it the clear meaning of "vengeance," "betrayal," "perfidy," and perhaps even "treason."



Doom

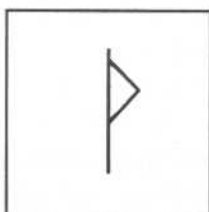
No meaning is immediately clear for this rune, but it seems to be associated with "bad health," "unpleasantness," and "pain." The Ogres of Bloten suggest that it conveys "fever," a meaning that is borne out by its resemblance to the reversal of a present-day rune for wholeness and wellness.





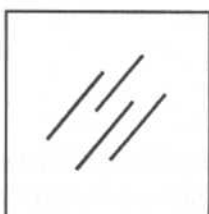
Attack

The meaning of this rune is suggested as "thunder" or even "journey." The top portion of the sigil bears a striking resemblance to our current runic symbol for strength.



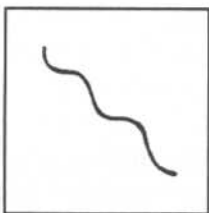
Betrayal

Called the "Ogre rune" by humans and Ogres alike, this symbol implies "conflict" and "complexity" and "aggression." Though the meaning is disputed, it is generally agreed by all that it is unpleasant in nature. It has the power to change the meanings of other runes when used in certain sequences.



Danger

This rune represents "weather," probably snow, possibly hail or rain, imparting the meaning of "danger," "hazard," or "jeopardy." The strongest reference for this interpretation comes from the translation of the Khrystann Verse, which mentions the perils of the uncontrolled forces of nature.



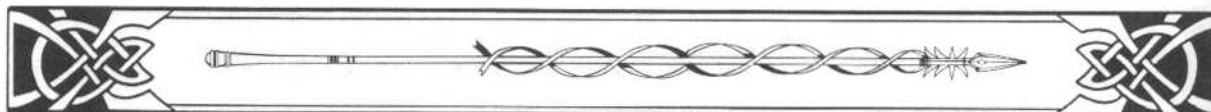
Water

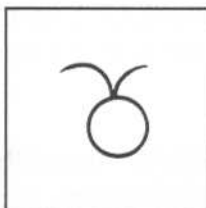
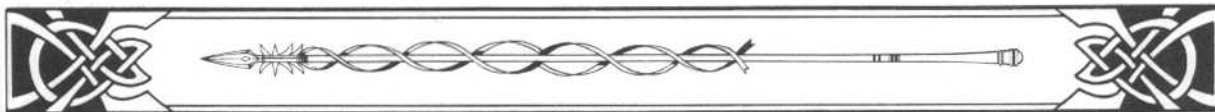
The origin of this symbol is obvious, with its similarity to running water. The rune represents "travel" or "journey," although an additional meaning is implied in the Khrystann Verse: Life.



Battle

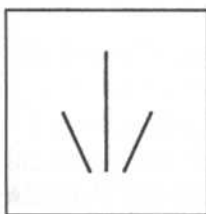
Although unlikely, Kiri Jolith, the God of War, seems to be represented by what the Ogres call a bison horn. "Victory," "protection from harm," "true strength," and "glory" are also suggested meanings. This symbol is frequently found incised on the blades of Ogre swords and daggers.





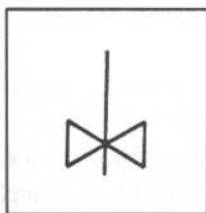
Augury

The representation of this rune might very well be an amulet suspended from a necklace, giving credence to the Ogre interpretation that it confers "defense," "protection," or "shelter."



Life

The stylized rays of the sun beam down "strength," "speed," and "health." Another connotation is "achievement," although these interpretations are disputed. The main support for the meaning is actually based upon this symbol's frequent use in the reverse format in conjunction with the rune for "death."



Death

The opposite of the "life" rune, this rune is represented by the upside-down axe of Morgion, God of Disease and Decay. The symbol, coupled with a universality of acceptance among the Ogre population makes the meaning of this rune indisputable. It is often used on weapons, supposedly to make the implement hungry for the death of the enemy.



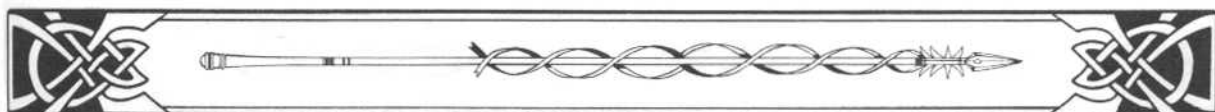
Inheritance

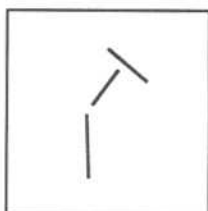
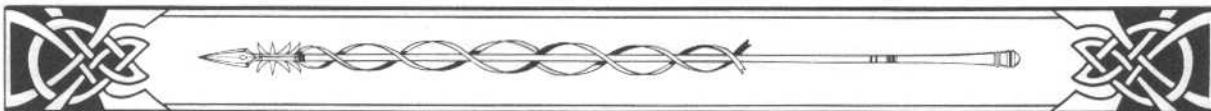
The meaning of this rune, "gift" or "value," is suggested by its resemblance to the common rune for "growth." Another meaning, "home," is forwarded because of the marking's likeness to mountain peaks. It is said the Old Ogres always chose the lofty peaks as their homes.



Cattle

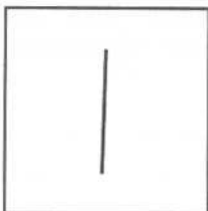
A sister rune to "inheritance," this symbol of the horns of an aurox connotes "wealth," "strength," and "prosperity." There is even a suggestion from the Ogres that it can be interpreted as meaning "food" or "human," a connotation which will not be explored in these pages.





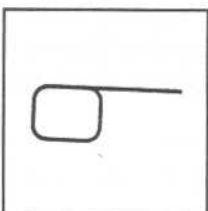
Greed

The stylized broken scales of Hiddukel, god of greed and ill-gotten gain, leaves very little doubt as to the meaning of this rune. The Ogres of Bloten call it "noik" and frequently scratch it on a tabletop, a doorframe, or on the ground before cementing a business deal, believing it will bring them luck and great riches.



Destruction

Ice is the symbolic representation of this rune. Like the rune for "danger," represented by hail, it represents the damaging natural forces of nature, and also carries a second connotation of "grievances." Like the runes for "death" and "battle," this symbol is frequently used by the Ogres on their weapons.



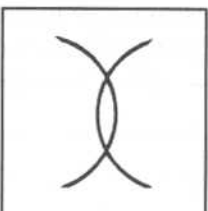
Gift

This rune stands for horse or cart, connoting "status" and "wealth," but is also universally accepted by the Ogres to connote a gift either given or received. There also seems to be some connection with the gods, as in "the gift of a message."



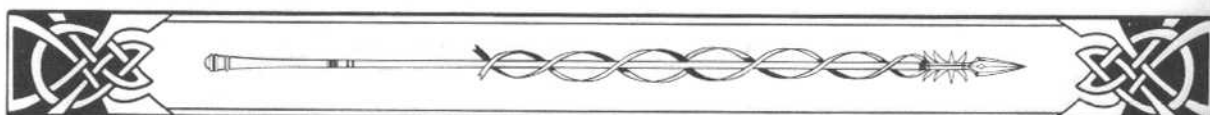
Future

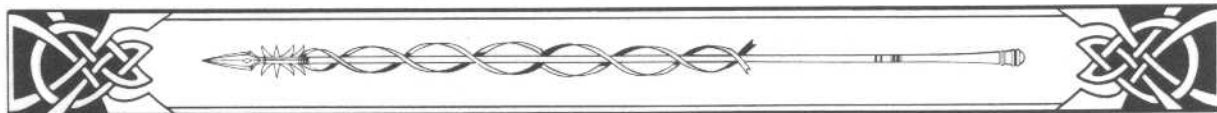
Perhaps the confusion with the rune for Gift comes from its similarity to this symbol, which stands for "deity," "language," "blessings," and "growth." Its symbol is the Lure tree, found only in the high reaches of the Khalkists. The Ogres believe that one who eats the blue buds of the tree on the first day of spring is protected from bewitchment.



The meaning of this rune is a complete mystery among the Ogres and the scholars and other sources who were consulted in the writing of this treatise. No attempt to translate it is made in the Khrystann Verse. An examination of the runic alphabets of today suggests a meaning of "spring," "first growth," or "fertility," due to its resemblance to the present symbol for harvest, but this is no more than a guess.

In addition to the simple, basic meanings suggested here, a method of combining the symbols and creating different meanings or more complicated messages was obviously used in the distant past, as is evident in the ornamentation on the buildings in the ruins of Takar and Bloten. Until there is greater knowledge of the runes and their meanings, however, the translation of such passages must remain a puzzle.





Landmarks of Ansalon

The Irda ruins are monolithic structures that are mere remnants of the once-great civilization of the Ogres from the Age of Dreams. These appear to be made of large, carefully cut and fitted stone blocks using a minimum of mortar, similar to Incan ruins.

The Ziggurat (Kothis NE)

A mixture between ancient Babylon's ziggurat and the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, a Persian appanada temple.

The Sword (Karthay, SW Bay)

A sunken colossus of a statue with the sword rising above the waves; sort of a Colossus of Rhodes originally guarding the bay to the heart of Istar.

Great Kings (Blood Sea NW)

Sunken tombs of the ancient kings and emperors of the Ogre Kingdoms; they bear a relation to the ancient pyramids of Egypt, though they may be more similar in form to Mayan and Aztec temples.

Antal Kism (Miremier E)

A ruined city grandly decorated with ancient friezes and frescoes, lost in the salt marshes of the Miremier; similar in appearance to the lost Mayan ruins of Teotihuacan.

The Faces (Kern S Mountains)

Ancient stone faces carved into the cliff faces and on the sides of fallen boulders that may have once marked the legendary lost "Hall of Kings," purported to be a canyon bearing the faces of the generations of rulers of the ancient Ogre Kingdoms; a blend of the faces of Easter Island and the Valley of the Kings in Egypt.

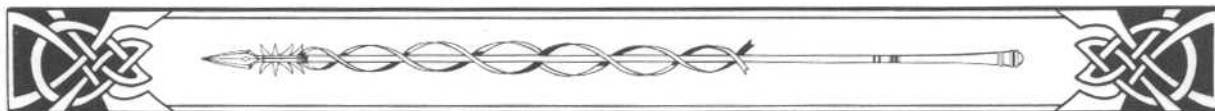
Ilial Tantzal (The Crown N)

A ruined city lost in the jungle overgrowth of the Crown; similar in appearance to the Thailand lost ruins of Angkor Wat.

The World's Spine (Blood Sea N to Saifhum)

A great wall and series of towers marches up out of the Blood Sea and across the northwestern shore of Saifhum before descending back into the sea. Some scholars attribute the World's Spine to the lost Ogre Kingdoms, but most note the presence of brass rods and a concrete mortar and date the wall to the excesses of one of the Kingpriests of Sunken Istar and a strategy to hold back the barbarian hordes.





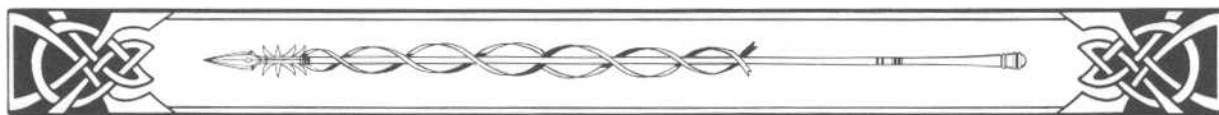
TRANSLATIONS of the VALLENWOOD SCROLLS

Five years ago it was when I, Calmas Dalanthis, then a merchant and collector of antiquities, now a scholar of mystical texts, first came across the Vallenwood Scrolls. And five years it has taken me, with the patience and guidance of many friends, to decipher and translate them.

While boarding at the Inn of the Last Home five years ago, I inadvertently acquired the scrolls from a kender who had lost a wager while playing the gambling game dragon bones. At the time of the wager, all she had left to bet were the proverbial clothes on her back, her topknot, and her grandmother's walking staff. I have never seen a kender without a topknot, but she opted to wager the staff instead. Her loss was my gain, so among my earnings that night was one kender walking staff.

Once back in my room, I began polishing the old stick, wondering what price I could ask for such a battered item. Perhaps I could sell it as a cherished kender heirloom. While buffing the stick with a soft facecloth provided by the inn, while twisting and turning that staff every which way to wipe the dirt and filth off it, I noticed the bottom of the staff had fallen off the stick. Cheap staff, I thought; not worth much. Grabbing the wooden knob that served as the tail end, I tried to slip it back into the staff. It just wouldn't go. So I looked into the open end of the staff and noticed yellowed parchment protruding. I pulled gently on the parchment and was rewarded with a lapful of ancient documents. Now this was curious: scrolls!





Very old and very fragile were the only phrases that came to mind as I contemplated the condition of those pages. And in a script that I had never seen. And decorated with glyphs I could not recognize.

After pulling out the parchment, I easily reattached the wooden end to the staff. I leaned it in a corner of my room and carefully placed the fragile documents between articles of clothing in a knapsack. Lucky for me that I had, for the next morning I spied from my bed that the staff had disappeared. Magic spell? Perhaps, but probably kender handling. So much for the staff. I jumped out of bed to check my knapsack. The ancient pages were still there.

During the past five years I have been able to discern the authenticity of the scrolls. I had the opportunity to show them to my longtime friend, Janus Ephlya, a renowned herbalist in my home town. After much examination and several tests, Janus informed me that the parchment of the scrolls was genuinely fibered from vallenwood pulp, not a common material.

At first, however, no one seemed to recognize the language of the script, though many were willing to venture a guess. Fortunately, a human cleric of Mishakal, a woman named Dewlight who had lived among the kender for several years, informed me that the script might be an antecedent to a modern-day Plains language. Being well versed in the many derivations of her native tongue, she was able, after three months of diligent effort and my healthy contribution to her church, to decipher the script. She had been correct in her assumption: The language of The Vallenwood Scrolls was essentially an ancient form of a Plains language with occasional etymological connections to a rarely spoken kender dialect.

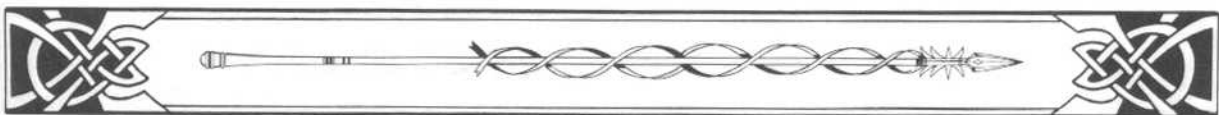
Since Dewlight's initial effort, I have devoted most of my energy to translating sections of The Vallenwood Scrolls and studying their profoundly mystical, yet practical, themes. All are quite intriguing to me, for I do not perceive the Plains people to be a folk prone to mystical experiences. Yet, the script insinuates an ancient generation of a Plains tribe and the scrolls themselves a highly spiritually aware people. Thus far, I have translated four areas of metaphysical thought: the universal essences of life, the teachings of the vallenwood tree, the elements of magic, and the lightbodies.

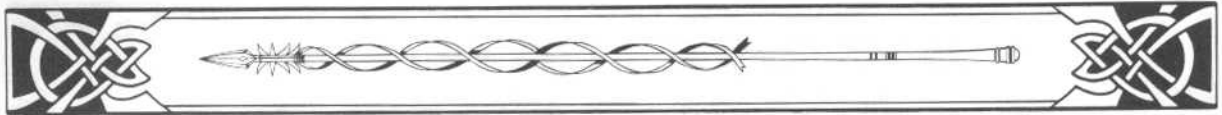
The section on the universal essences addresses the spiritual development of an individual, responsibilities to self and community, and sacred alignment with the gods of one's choice. This part of The Vallenwood Scrolls introduces the mystical voice and mood that are the bases for the entire text.

The second theme presents the vallenwood as Tree of Life (an odd concept, considering the rarity of the vallenwood as a species), as metaphor for how we should express the diverse gifts and manifest the personal potentials bestowed upon us by the Triple Gods of Kryn. A word of caution, however: Do NOT attempt the herbal remedies described in this section of the scrolls unless you are a trained herbalist.

The following section of the scrolls presents the elements of magic, all eight of them. Here, the magical laws of solidity, fluidity, motion, and transmutation are explored. Possible correlations between certain gems and the eight points of the magic circle are also offered.

The last section, and my personal favorite, of The Vallenwood Scrolls discusses the lightbodies, the magical energy fields that apparently flow along the spinal column and limbs of any corporeal creature: human, kender, dwarf, ogre, you name it. Here, color, vocal toning, and breath work are united for per-





sonal meditation and maintenance of a dynamic mind-spirit-body connection.

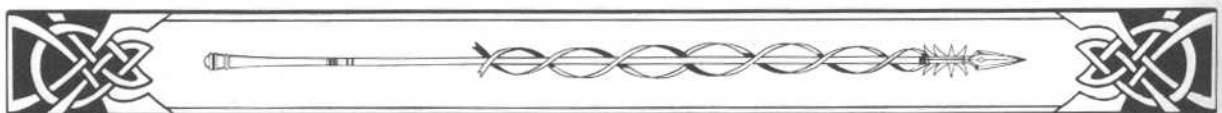
Each of the four themes of *The Vallenwood Scrolls* is introduced by a circular diagram of what I am now calling the Eightfold Way of the Circle of Life: a spiritual awareness and appreciation of the creation of Krynne according to not just the four cardinal points—a bias common to many religious traditions as well as schools of magic—but also the four minor compass points, those that link two cardinal directions. Such a presentation and mystical interpretation of the Circle of Life is rare. For example, if I were to ask a friend to list the four elements of life, he or she would mention earth, water, air, and fire. This is to be expected since these elements are common to a great variety of sacred religious ceremonies and magical spells. Yet, if I were to ask for four more, he or she would probably balk. *The Vallenwood Scrolls*, however, pose and answer such a question—and not just for the elements but for all themes contemplated therein. The answer is delightfully simple and is found in the union of directions. Just as the word southwest joins the words south and west, so is its elemental essence a combination of the natural powers assigned to the south and the west. If the south presents the mysteries of earth and the west water, it is only natural that the southwest teaches about mud, the element that unites earth with water. By addressing the mystical teachings of “secondary” compass points of the Circle of Life, *The Vallenwood Scrolls* “fill in” the cosmological and metaphysical gaps that exist in more traditional belief systems, be they religious, philosophical, or magical.

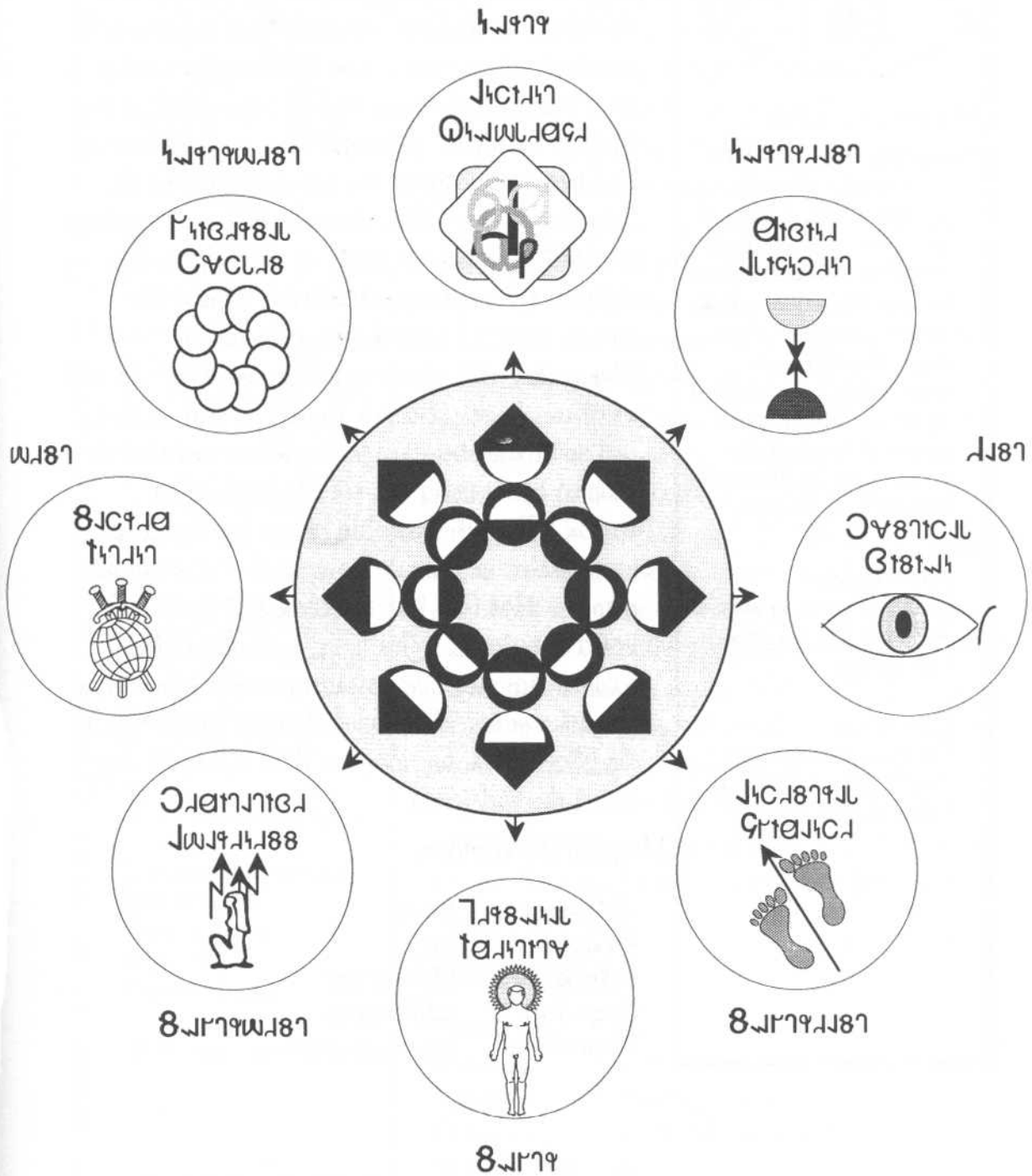
I have found that the best way to study and understand the mystical teachings of *The Vallenwood Scrolls* is to explore each theme individually yet sequentially as presented in the original text. In other words, begin by studying the universal essences, as they create the mystical foundation of the scrolls. Take time to examine and contemplate the Eightfold Way of the universal essences before extending your studies to the vallenwood teachings. Afterward, move on to the elements, then finally the lightbodies.

Once you have an understanding for the spiritual essence of each section of *The Vallenwood Scrolls*, contemplate the union of themes according to a specific compass point. For example, if I wanted to develop a better appreciation for the teachings of the northwest, I would examine how the Universal Cycles (from the universal essences) affect and are affected by Bark (from the vallenwood theme), Fog (from the elements of magic), and Twin Wheels (from the lightbodies section). Such a mode of study helps me understand the interrelatedness of the scroll themes, the universal truth that everything is mirrored in everything.

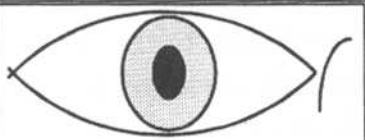
Of course, approximately two-fifths of the text has yet to be translated. And the implications of Plains origin need to be assessed in terms of the history of Krynne—political, religious, and magical. Nonetheless, it is apparent to me that ancient wisdom emanates from *The Vallenwood Scrolls*, a wisdom that could enlighten and guide a troubled world such as ours.

Calmas Dalanthis





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Pictograph: Mystic Gaze

Iconography: Perception reaches both outward to the quality of life each individual manifests and inward to the motivations of the soul. The white aqueous humor of this image denotes the power for good of Solinari, whereas the black pupil symbolizes the potential of evil of Nunitari. Balancing both extremes is the red iris of Lunitari, reminding all creatures to honor the "middle road."

Chant:

I close my eyes,
I close my eyes to see within,
To feel the fire of my soul.
I open my eyes.

I open my eyes,
I open my eyes to see about,
To walk the truth of my being.
I close my eyes.

Spiritual Teaching: Every day the sun emerges over the horizon in the East, so each dawn offers me the potential for newness — be it a new relationship, a new place to live, a new task to accomplish, a new creative endeavor. Newness, then, is a key concept of ᐱᕐᕐᕐᕐᕐᕐ ᐱᕐᕐᕐᕐᕐᕐ, the eastern portal to the Wheel of Being. But, the numinous impact of dawn is rebirth, for with the rising of the sun, the light of awareness is once again kindled. Through the eastern portal, I enter the fiery domain of illumination, that place of enlightenment of who and why I am. Mystical vision reminds me that my body and spirit have been forged by Reorx and that the shaping of my being has not occurred without reason. Thus, the visionary aspect of the eastern portal helps me look within my soul to identify my purpose: what I am here to accomplish to keep the world in balance. For some, universal balance requires that they live according to the White Way; for other folks, their mystical vision guides them to the Black Path; so, too, are there those who must travel the Red Road.

Magical Connections:

Vallenwood:	leaves
Elemental:	fire
Lightbody:	Flaming Orb
Dragonkind:	gold dragons
Sacred Ritual:	rites of passage

(Southeast: Ancestral Guidance)



Chant:

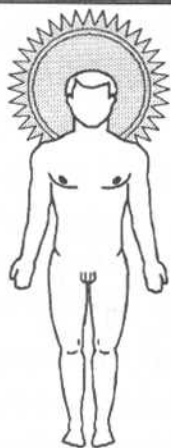
Footprints of my ancestors,
Teach us they do,
Remind us they do,
Heal us they may,
Torment us they may.

Behold, my footprints!

Magical Connections:

Vallenwood:	sap
Elemental:	metal
Lightbody:	Portal of Souls
Dragonkind:	copper and red dragons
Sacred Ritual:	quest

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Pictograph: Celestial Self

Iconography: The secure, self-affirming person recognizes and appreciates her or his unique talents, potentials, insights, creative skills, and links to the Wheel of Being. The solar disk behind the human figure reflects the value placed on the development of individual identity, regardless of whether its expressions tend toward neutrality, good, or evil.

Chant:

I am blessed,
 Blessed am I,
 Kin of the gods of Krynn.

I am the Bard King's harp,
 The Queen of Dragons,
 The bright Flowing Flame.

I am blessed,
 Blessed am I,
 Kin of the gods of Krynn.

Spiritual Teaching: The gods of Krynn have created more than just vallenwood trees. Maples, pines, oaks, birches, and willows also abound upon the abundant belly of the earth. Though each species of tree is similar in essence to its kindred trees — for example, all have buds, leaves, trunk, bark, and roots — each being has a unique way of expressing its “treeness” — maples have yellow or ruddy leaves, whereas pines have pointy green needles, for instance. So it is with all creatures: diversity within harmony. When I acknowledge and honor the unique expressions of life around me, I recognize that the universal song of life cannot be sung without the varied voices of creation.

Therefore, I strive diligently to sound my own voice — not someone else's — by nurturing, exploring, and testing my skills, ideas, beliefs, dreams, and potentials. Evolution of personal identity, then, is a key concept of ᕐᕐᕐᕐᕐᕐ ᕐᕐᕐᕐᕐᕐ, the southern portal of the Wheel of Being. Development of a genuine identity necessitates a balanced integration of self-concept, self-esteem, self-determination, and body awareness. Without the blessings of my personal identity, I have no tools by which to manifest my mystical vision.

Magical Connections:

Vallenwood:	trunk
Elemental:	earth
Lightbody:	Dragon Egg
Dragonkind:	blue dragons
Sacred Ritual:	protection

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(Southwest: Meditative Awareness)



Iconography. This image depicts the power to change not only one's own life but also the environment. The woman seated on one leg while the other has its foot touching the ground is a traditional skamanic posture of profound connectedness with the source of life. The bolts of lightning ascending to the sky illustrate the ability to alter reality if one listens to the god-force within.

Chant:

Rhythm of life seated in me,
Rhythm of life swaying around;
I sit to feel you,
I sit to hear you,
I sit to know.

Rhythm of life seated in me,
I whisper the dreams.
Rhythm of life swaying around,
I shape the mysteries.

Spiritual Teaching: Numinous knowledge that leads to discovery of my relationships with the world may occur either through study and interpretation of the ancient religious and magical texts or through quiet contemplation of the gods themselves. This second mode, meditative awareness, is the essence of **Chaninbi Juwih**, the southwestern portal of the Wheel of Being. Meditative awareness requires both indwelling (the ability to mirror my own truth back to myself) and receptivity (my willingness to receive). As I indwell, I reflect honestly on my own identity and mystical vision. When I become receptive, I understand the messages of my dreams, flow with the inspirations bestowed upon me by the Triple Gods, and follow the intuitive voice within. Thus, as I explore the mysteries of being, I discover the means by which to interact with them and change the world in which I live. Meditation and divination are the twin daughters of the southwestern portal. The elder twin, Meditation, reminds me to synchronize my heartbeat with the rhythm of life created by Gilean, Paladine, and Takhisis. The younger twin, Divination, teaches me how to mold myself, my environment, and the future generations according to the insights gained from her twin.

Magical Connections:

Vallenwood:	fruit
Elemental:	mud
Lightbody:	Wreath of Roses
Dragonkind:	black dragons
Sacred Ritual:	naming

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(West: Sacred Intent)



Pictograph: Swords of Oneness

Iconography: Some historians believe this glyph first appeared during the Age of Might. Others claim its origins may be found in the myths and songs of the Age of Dreams. Regardless of the theory to which one ascribes, the globe depicts Kryn. The three swords represent the gifts bestowed upon the spirits of Kryn by the Triple Gods.

Chant:

Kryn, O Kryn,
I am Paladine,
Father of life.

Kryn, O Kryn,
I am Takhis,
Mother of strife.

Kryn, O Kryn,
I am Gilean,
Brother to both,
So freedom is nife.

Spiritual Teaching: The HighGod decreed the Balance of the World, the dwelling place of spirits, the home I know as Kryn. In the moment of those words spoken, the Swords of Oneness pierced the heart and flesh of Kryn. The Gods of Good bestowed the spirits with physicality and life; theirs was the sword of order, peace, morality, and righteousness. Then, the Gods of Evil offered hunger, thirst, and toil; theirs was the sword of anger, jealousy, fear, and dissension. Finally, the Gods of Neutrality, witnessing the polarity of the first two blessings, brought the spirits the capacity to choose between goodness and evil; theirs was the sword of free will. Which sword do I wield in my life is the potent question that 8ⱢⱢⱢⱢ ⱢⱢⱢⱢ, the western portal of the Wheel of Being, poses to all creatures. The sword I carry with me and the ways in which I use it signify the sacred intent that motivates my encounters and interactions with other beings. Yet, no path is less sacred or reflects greater integrity than the other two. Without the hideous, I cannot cherish beauty. Without compassion, I cannot direct the expressions of my woundedness. And, only when dispassionate can I evaluate the caliber of my life performance.

Magical Connections:

Vallenwood:	roots
Elemental:	water
Lightbody:	Forging Hammer
Dragonkind:	bronze dragons
Sacred Ritual:	thanksgiving

(Northwest: Universal Cycles)



Iconography: The universal cycles of life are illustrated by a larger circle insinuated by the arrangement of smaller circles. This glyph is composed of eight circles, each representing a portal of the Wheel of Being. As one circle overlaps another, so one essence of the wheel affects and is affected by another. The Eightfold Way is a mnemonic for the links between the eight portals.

Buds of spring,
Hear my breath awaken.
Blossoms of summer,
Watch my talents bloom.
Fruit of autumn,
Taste my abundance.
Barren limbs of winter,
Touch my wrinkles.

Song of the seasons,
I gather these seeds,
Molt this skin.

Spiritual Teaching: Upward to the heavens I gaze each day, and I watch the shifting faces of the sun — sunrise, noonday, twilight, midnight, then dawn once again. Downward to the earth my thoughts contemplate the gentle rains of spring, the intense summer heat, the harvest of autumn, the biting wintry winds, then the spring storms once again. Outward to my village I witness the playful curiosity of children, the rebelliousness of adolescents, the commitments and duties of adults, the tolerance and humor of elders, then the birth of babies once again. Inward to myself I examine the cycles of my own life and recognize a universal pattern that ebbs and flows. This continuity helps me maintain a firm belief in the never-ending, ever-changing cycles evident in all life. Continuity, then, is a key concept of **ḤḤḤḤḤḤ CYCLAS**, the northwestern portal of the Wheel of Being. Through the northwestern portal, I enter the misty domain of universality, the place where there are neither beginnings nor endings, where I explore the mysteries of birth, growth, decay, death, and rebirth and make them my spiritual mentors.

Magical Connections:

Vallenwood:	bank
Elemental:	fog
Lightbody:	Twin Wheels
Dragonkind:	brass and green dragons
Sacred Ritual:	calendric celebrations

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Pictograph: Sign of the Sages

Iconography: Language reflects intelligence, so the mystical script in the center of this glyph indicates knowledge and wisdom gained through reading, communication, interpretation. The rounded squares overlap in such a way that each corner points to one of the eight portals of the Wheel of Being. Spiritual knowledge can be acquired, therefore, by contemplating each portal.

Chant:

Speak, I shall
 To the wind caressing my face,
 To the wingeds in flight,
 To the memories of stones,
 To the mystical tomes.

Speak, I shall
 In my ancient language,
 Of the wisdom gleaned from
 the lessons of life.


Hear now my words!

Spiritual Teaching: The persistence of memory, of recording in some way for posterity what each being has discovered or learned about life, is the breath that motivates not only the initiation of the soul quest but also the desire to have, then provide for others, a map. All petroglyphs, pictographs, and primitive etchings; every dance, chant, and story; each scroll, tome, and book; all these collections of memories — be they religious, historical, political, magical, or mundane — communicate the relentless need to share life lessons with future generations. The need to understand life, then, is a key concept of ᐱᓄᓄᓄᓄᓄ ᐱᓄᓄᓄᓄᓄᓄᓄ, the northern portal of the Wheel of Being. Through this portal, I enter the airy domain of wisdom, the place where I learn to discern when and with whom I should engage the gifts of my unique identity for the fulfillment of my mystical vision. Here, I also become the mentor, the sage, to other beings, sharing with them the knowledge and wisdom I have accrued from past experiences. And at this portal, we all struggle to live our lives as genuinely as we can, being true to our natures, yet paradoxically relinquishing the incessant doubts and questions about who we are and what we ought to accomplish in life.

Magical Connections:

Vallenwood:	seeds
Elemental:	air
Lightbody:	Eye of Twilight
Dragonkind:	white dragons
Sacred Ritual:	purification

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Pictograph: Coming Together

Iconography: The silver-white orb of Solinari pushes constantly against the dark, often unseen, moon of Nuitari. The two arrows indicate their struggle. Where those arrows meet denotes the balancing effect of their brother, Lunitari.

Chant:

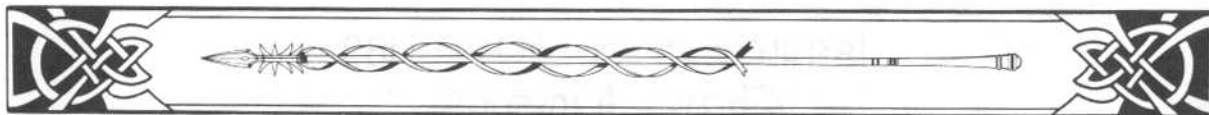
Push and pull,
 We do,
 The bickering offspring
 Of good and evil.
 We battle each other forever
 Until forever ends.

Pushed and pulled
 Are we,
 The tolerant children
 Of the middle way.
 We are the battlefield
 Until earth and sky disappear.

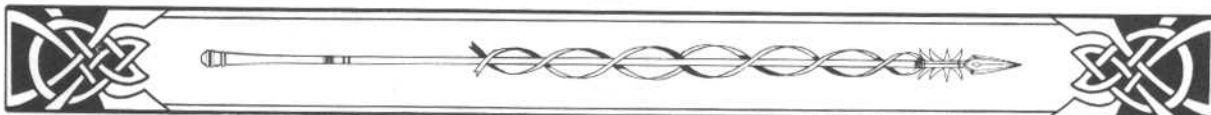
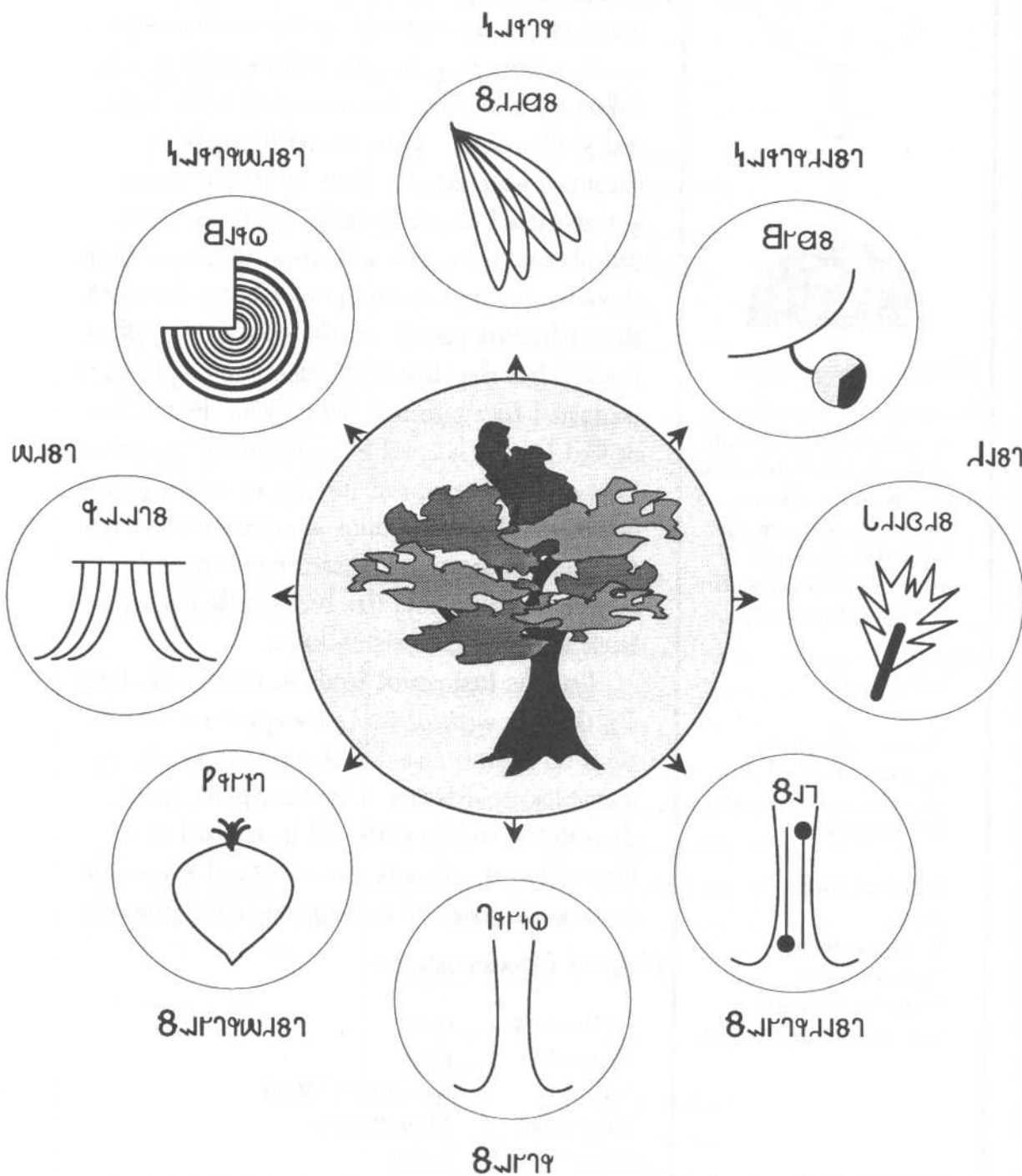
Yet, this last portal leads me back to the first! Of the many mystical issues I may not understand, this I do believe: One day the precious metals of innovation, compassion, indecision, pride, greed, desperation, and so forth will be returned to the Great Forger, who will upon His anvil hammer out a new world, one with a design different from ours.

Magical Connections:

Vallenwood:	buds
Elemental:	hail
Lightbody:	Branchala's Thread
Dragonkind:	silver dragons
Sacred Ritual:	healing



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(East: Leaves of the Vallenwood)



Pictograph: Leaf of Hope

Iconography: This simple, stylized depiction of a leaf from the vallenwood tree is a reminder to develop a newer awareness of or a greater appreciation for the mysteries of life. Like the leaf, each being must reach outward to the light in order to grow and feed the inner self.

Prayer:

To see again the leaves of
spring,
To hear again their gentle
rustling,
I am touched by new life.

I am the newness of life;
As the leaves of spring,
I reach out to sunlight,
I grow, I expand!

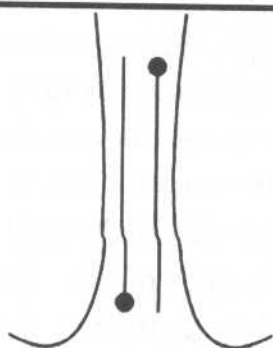
Spiritual Teaching: The beautiful, deep green leaves of the vallenwood are always slowly turning to face sunlight. As the passage of the sun moves from eastern horizon to zenith to western horizon, so shift the vallenwood's leaves. The leaves seek the warmth and light that fuel the tree's growth. So, too, must I open myself to those experiences, those teachings, and those relationships that will strengthen my physical, emotional, and mental vibrations as well as sustain the power of my mystical vision. Nurturance, then, is the primal urge of ላላግሊ, the "eyes" of the wondrous vallenwood.

Herbal Remedy: (Enhances your connection to mystical vision.) Gather a dozen vallenwood leaves and three sprigs of parsley. Crumble the leaves and parsley in a cup of water. Add several slices of cucumber. Heat the vegetable matter until the fluid boils, then let cool till tepid. Prepare two poultices of the plant mixture, one for each eye. Allow the poultices to remain upon the eyes for an hour. Afterward, flush out eyes with fresh water, and bury the poultices near leafy vegetables in your, or a neighbor's, garden.

Magical Connections:

Universal Essence:	mystical vision
Elemental:	fire
Lightbody:	Flaming Orb
Plant Folk:	green leafy vegetables

(Southeast: Sap of the Vallenwood)



Iconography: The two round-headed lines indicate the flow of the sap within the trunk of the vallenwood. Just as our blood keeps us alive, so does the sap of the vallenwood sustain its life, by connecting roots to trunk to branches to leaves. Through the Flow, all elements of the tree are united.

What is this that runs through me?

What is this that flows from finger to toe?

What is this that joins the generations?

Blood of life,
Sap of being,
Through you am I joined.

Spiritual Teaching: The thick ruby sap of the vallenwood flows twice each year: once heavily in early spring, then again less abundantly in late autumn. With the warm rains of spring, the life blood of the tree moves quickly, invigorating the tree to new life; yet, with the harvest of fall, the pace is much slower, preparing the vallenwood for the dormancy of winter. So, too, is the pace of my life affected by the seasons — calendric or metaphoric. At times I must rush ahead with great enthusiasm, and at others I require rest, relaxation, and moments of quiet assessment. Pacing life, then, is the primal urge of 817, the "blood" of the wondrous vallenwood.

Herbal Remedy: (Enhances your connection to the ancestors.) Boil two ounces each of wild cherry bark, cubeb berries, mullein, skunk cabbage, and lobelia. Add four quarts of boiling water to the mixture, simmer ten minutes, and let cool. Strain mixture through a double cheesecloth. Put in a porcelain cooking dish, add four pounds of brown sugar. Boil this down to a medium thick syrup. Add the juice of four lemons, and let boil two to three minutes longer. Strain again. When cool, it is ready for use.

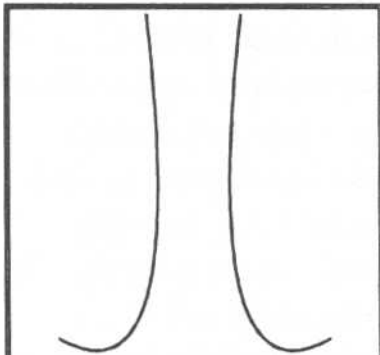
Magical Connections:

Universal Essence:	ancestral guidance
Elemental:	metal
Lightbody:	Portal of Souls
Plant Folk:	syrup from tree sap, nectar

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(South: Trunk of the Vallenwood)



Pictograph: Vitality Lines

Iconography: The two downward-curving lines, like those of the glyph of the southeast, depict the trunk of the vallenwood. The symmetric nature of this pictograph offers a sense of balance and stability that is the core of the spiritual lesson from the vallenwood's trunk.

Prayer:

Stand mighty I do,
Stand mighty I shall
Against the winds, the rains,
and the snows of winter.

Stand mighty I do,
Stand mighty I shall;
None can touch me,
None can harm me.

Stand mighty I shall!

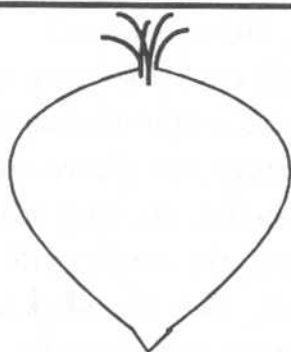
Spiritual Teaching: The thick, cloven trunk and gnarled branches of the vallenwood are proof of the slow yet steady growth and resultant strength of the tree. As each spring arrives, new shoots extend from the trunk and older branches, promising greater beauty and vitality, yet testing the stability and wholeness of the vallenwood. Only that which can be supported survives; sometimes young branches fail to develop, sometimes old ones wither and die. So it is with the nature of my life: certain potentials I have not fully explored or nurtured may not withstand the challenges of life, and some once-helpful, now-detrimental personal attitudes, patterns, and beliefs may need to die so new ways of being can emerge. Stability is the primal urge of ᐱᐱᐱᐱ, the "strength" of the vallenwood.

Herbal Remedy: (Heals muscle soreness.) Combine two ounces of powdered myrrh, one ounce of powdered golden seal, and a half-ounce of cayenne pepper with one quart of rubbing alcohol (70%). Mix ingredients together and let stand for seven days, shaking the mixture well every day. After the seventh day, decant and store in corked bottles. Apply liniment as frequently as needed, saturating the area of soreness.

Magical Connections:

Universal Essence:	personal identity
Elemental:	earth
Lightbody:	Dragon Egg
Plant Folk:	vegetable stalks (e.g., celery)

(Southwest: Fruit of the Vallenwood)



Iconography: The pomegranate-like fruit of the vallenwood tree speaks of harvest, of the time of gathering and celebrating what has been carefully sown and tended during the prior seasons. Like the fruit — wholesome or spoiled — the outward abundance or scarcity in each being's life reflects the inner truth that nurtured or resisted individual growth.

Berries bright purple in color,
The harvest moon beckons me.
Hips upon the rose bushes,
The harvest moon beckons me.
Grapes clinging to the vine,
The harvest moon beckons me.
Apples and plums abound,
The harvest moon beckons me.
Life is joyous, life is joyous.

Spiritual Teaching: Within the tough, rosy rind of the vallenwood fruit are many tiny seeds enclosed in a sweet, juicy, crimson pulp. Since only a young vallenwood tree (one under fifteen years of age) produces fruit, both pulp and seeds are highly sought for agricultural and culinary purposes. The time of fertility is short but serves well to propagate the species, limited as it may be upon the face of Krynn. An abundant season promises plentiful offspring in the years ahead. So, too, do my current actions, beliefs, feelings, and ideas influence my future. Preparation, creativity, flexibility, responsibility — all these contribute to an effective and productive life. Abundance, not to be confused solely with material wealth, is the primal urge of **Prrr**, the "soul" of the mighty vallenwood.

Food Preparation: (Celebrates abundance.) Gather one pound of sun chokes (Jerusalem artichokes). Scrub the chokes well to remove sand out of their tiny crevices. Peel the sun chokes, cutting them into 1/4-inch thick slices. Heat a quarter cup of bacon drippings, and fry the slices until tender. Season to taste.

Magical Connections:

Universal Essence: meditative awareness

Elemental: mud

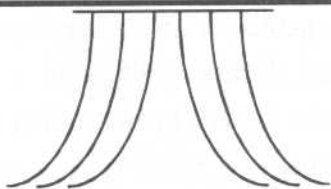
Lightbody: Wreath of Roses

Plant Folk: fruit, vegetables

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(West: Roots of the Vallenwood)



Pictograph: Inner Sanctum

Iconography: The straight horizontal line at the top of this pictograph denotes the surface of the earth. The six curved, drooping lines symbolize the roots of the vallenwood, the part of the tree that seeks life-sustaining water, that works its way around obstructions.

Prayer:

Let my senses dig deeply
into my body,
They are the roots of my tree.

Let my thoughts ignite a fire
in my head,
They are the roots of my tree.

Let my ideals dive into the pool
of my heart,
They are the roots of my tree.

Let my faith rise like a fountain
from my soul,
They are the roots of my tree.

Spiritual Teaching: Slowly yet endlessly do the roots seek within the soil the moisture and nutrients the tree needs to survive and mature. In their search, they plunge into the ground and stretch around and beyond seemingly impassable obstacles. As the roots below the surface expand, their mass becomes correspondingly as large as the body of the tree that remains above ground. If not, the roots could not support the weight and the vallenwood would topple. Such a marvelous metaphor for my own being! I, too, must probe the unseen territory of my inner self to discover the inherent magic and sacred intent of my soul, which provide a stable foundation for my daily life. Support, then, is the primal urge of ᑭᑭᑭᑭ, the "heart" of the vallenwood.

Herbal Remedy: (Purifies the blood.) Gather the inner bark, leaves, or flowers of the linden. Bring the tree ingredients to a boil, adding ½ cup of dandelion roots and ¾ cup of burdock roots. Lemon or lime rind, licorice root, or anise leaves may be used as spices. Let the mixture simmer for five minutes, then strain and store in corked bottles. For best results, drink a cup of this blood-detoxifying tea four times a day for two weeks.

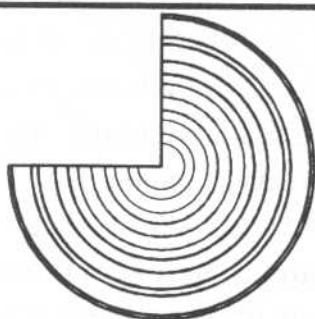
Magical Connections:

Universal Essence:	sacred intent
Elemental:	water
Lightbody:	Forging Hammer
Plant Folk:	roots, taproots, tubers, bulbs

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(Northwest: Bank of the Vallenwood)



Pictograph: Layers of Being

Iconography: This glyph depicts the stump of the vallenwood, which reveals its numerous cycles of growth. Like the stump, if we look inside ourselves, we may also see the lines of self-exploration, discovery, and experience that constitute who we have been and now are as we journey through life.

Prayer:

I am old,
I am grandfather to the trees.
I am ancient as their stories.

Behold the lines of curiosity
of my childhood.
Behold the lines of rebellion
of my youth.
Behold the lines of duty
of my adult years.
Behold the lines of tolerance
of my time as an elder.

Spiritual Teaching: As the years progress, the layers of bank of the vallenwood thicken, serving as a living testament to the tree's journey from sapling to mature plant. Years of experience teach the tree how best to shape its bark to protect itself against the whims of nature. Yet, just as the roots remain hidden in the ground, so do the lines indicating the growth of the tree remain unseen within the trunk.

Thus, like my sister the vallenwood, who and how I am are often determined by life experiences and the lessons they have taught me. What I show to the world is my "bank," the mask I have constructed to shield myself from those on that which would harm or destroy me. Protection is the primal urge of ᑭᑭᑭ, the "skin" of the ancient vallenwood.

Herbal Remedy: (Cleanses the circulatory system.)

Gather a half-pound of the inner bank of a birch. Cut into small pieces. Boil until the bark is soft but not mushy. Add a dozen cherry blossoms, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of crushed sage, and a few drops of honey. Cherry flavors the tea, honey sweetens it, and sage assists with alleviating any respiratory distress. Simmer the ingredients for ten minutes, then strain. Drink tepid. Birch tea has a pleasant taste and makes a refreshing beverage in place of water.

Magical Connections:

Universal Essence:	universal cycles
Elemental:	fog
Lightbody:	Twin Wheels
Plant Folk:	outer & inner bank of trees & shrubs

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(North: Seeds of the Vallenwood)



Pictograph: Seeds of Time

Iconography: This glyph depicts a cluster of seeds from inside the vallenwood fruit. The seeds themselves represent the promises of transition and transformation. Though the seed contains potential, no new growth will occur until it is sown.

Prayer:

I have planted one tree,
A tree of joy and hope.
See here, I hold its seeds.

I have planted one tree,
A tree of loss and despair.
See here, I hold its seeds.

I have planted one tree,
A tree of love and balance.
See here, I hold its seeds.

I have planted one thousand
trees.

Spiritual Teaching: Hundreds of tiny violet seeds are encased within the pulp and rind of the fruit of a young vallenwood. These seeds are the product of the joint energies of the parent trees and, as such, contain their memories. All their experiences remain as silent voices and untold stories until the seeds are planted, calling forth the next generation of vallenwood. Since the tree's energy is concentrated within the dormant seeds, so is its potential.

However, once sown in fertile ground, the seeds take root and tender shoots emerge, all guided by the wisdom of past generations of vallenwood.

Thus, the seeds denote latent, unmanifested forces. Remembrance, then, is the primal urge of ᑭᐱᐱᐱᐱ, the "memory" of the wondrous vallenwood.

Herbal Remedy: (Enhances memory.) Gather an ounce of red clover blossoms and burdock seeds, two ounces of purple grape seeds, and a half-ounce of blood root. Chop finely the clover blossoms and blood root. Mix well the ingredients in a pint of hot water and a pint of hot apple cider. Let steep for two hours. Strain and store in corked bottles. The dosage is a jigger six times a day: one shot-glass of the brew to be consumed about 30 minutes prior to a meal, the other 30 minutes after.

Magical Connections:

Universal Essence: ancient knowledge

Elemental: air

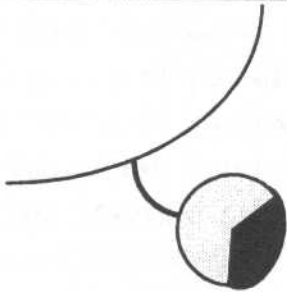
Lightbody: Eye of Twilight

Plant Folk: dried seeds, grains, legumes, nuts

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(Northeast: Buds of the Vallenwood)



Pictograph: The Emerging Self

Iconography: This plain depiction of a bud from the vallenwood reflects not only each being's potential to change, grow, and develop but also the desire to do so. The bud is the symbol of movement from possibility to actuality.

Prayer:

Season of change,
Winds of movement,
Come now, come now,
Wrap yourselves around me.

Season of change,
Winds of movement,
Come now, come now,
Help me molt my old feathers.

Season of change,
Winds of movement,
Come now, come now,
Dance with me a new dance.

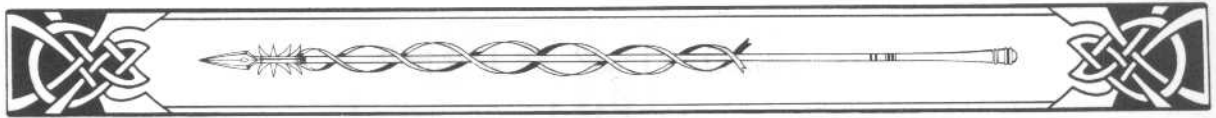
Spiritual Teaching: As spring approaches, the vallenwood, like many perennials, begins to sprout buds along its branches, promising new stems and flowers in the seasons yet to come. Within the bud, the potential of newness exists. However, the very process of budding signifies the tree's willingness to manifest new growth, to bring to tangible form the intangible potentials. So it must be with myself, so must I have the desire to evolve, at whatever levels, emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual.

Aspirations and possibilities are not enough; they must be realized if my mystical vision, personal power, and unique talents are to have an impact on the world. Emergence, then, is the lesson of ᐅᐅᐅ, the "potential" of the great vallenwood.

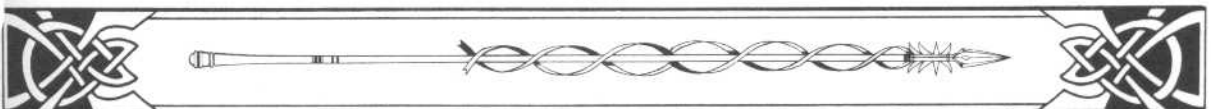
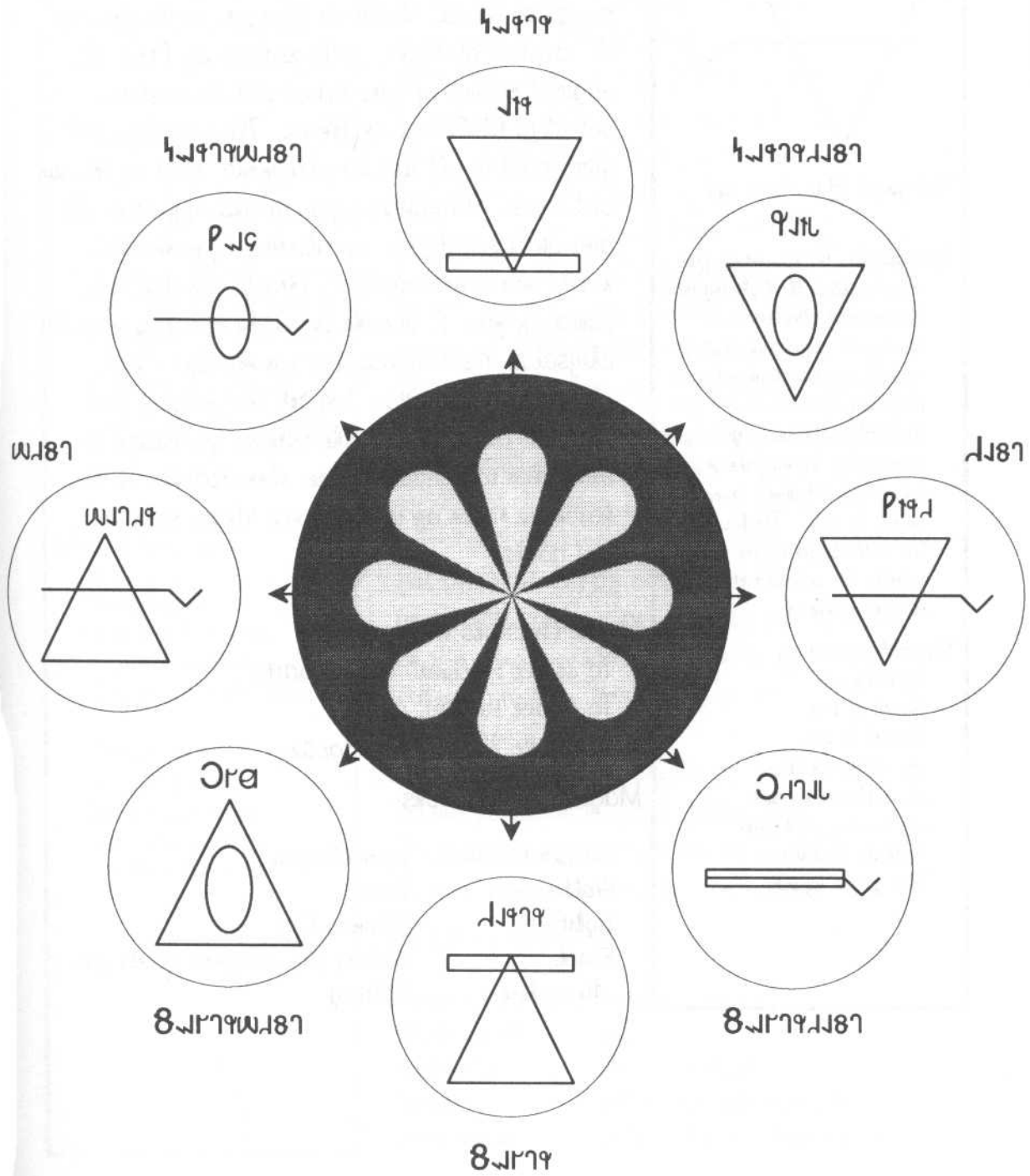
Herbal Remedy: (Energizes the body.) In a bath of warm water, sprinkle buds of the balm of gilead and lavender, small pieces of inner bark from a hickory or red willow, and crushed, dried leaves from the yerba santa and spearmint plants. Immerse yourself, excluding your head, in the herbal water. Soak yourself in the bath, breathing in the vapor, for about 15 minutes. Step out of the bath, dry yourself, then pat your arms, legs, and torso gently with branches of desert sage.

Magical Connections:

Universal Essence:	divine alignment
Elemental:	hail
Lightbody:	Branchala's Thread
Plant Folk:	flower buds and blossoms



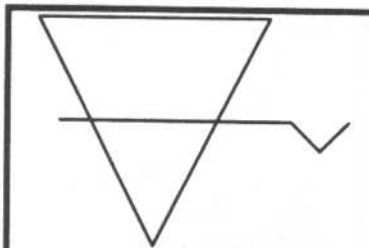
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(East: Fire)



Pictograph: Fire Above and Within

Iconography: The element of fire is witnessed in the lightning that accompanies thunderstorms. Hence, the downward-pointing triangle of this glyph indicates the power of the heavens. Yet, the earth itself has a great fire in its belly, warming the ground upon which all things creep, crawl, or walk. The hooked line in the center of the triangle reveals this second truth about the fire elemental.

Magical Invocation:

Spirit of fire,
Spark of life,
Be with me now
As I light the skies,
As I illumine my eyes,
As I set my soul afire
With the inner vision
That guides my way.

Spiritual Teaching: The spark of life, given to all beings by Reonx, the Great Forger, at the time of the creation of Krynn, is the essence of ᐱᐱᐱᐱ, the magical element of fire linked with the eastern portal to the Wheel of Being. The fire elemental gives birth to all radiant phenomena, such as the sun and stars. It awakens my spirit and offers me the gift of transmutation, of altering my form and nature into something else. Through the dynamic power of fire, I, like the butterfly emerging from its chrysalis, create a new life for myself. With flashes of inspiration, I spark new insights and projects, and I possess the burning enthusiasm to bring them to fruition. Fire, then, teaches me to honor the realm of initiating new ideas, solutions, and goals.

Ritual Crystals & Gemstones:

To invoke Solinari: citrine quartz
To invoke Lunitari: amber
To invoke Nunitari: gold topaz

Magical Connections:

Universal Essence:	mystical vision
Valleenwood:	leaves
Lightbody:	Flaming Orb
Earth:	cooking fire, campfire, forest fire
Atmosphere:	lightning

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(Southeast: Metal)



Pictograph: Treasures of the Earth

Iconography: This elemental is witnessed in naturally occurring metals of the earth — gold, silver, iron, lead, and so forth. The rectangle of this glyph indicates the wondrous treasures within the ground. The hooked line in the center of the rectangle reminds us that these precious gifts can be joined together to create alloys — brass, bronze, steel — which are often stronger and more durable than their parent metals.

Magical Invocation:

Voice of fire,
Voice of earth,
Share now the wonders
of the millennia,
The treasures of the ancestors.

Power of earth,
Power for fire,
Join now your voices,
Join now your mysteries,
For the treasures yet to be.

Spiritual Teaching: The story of life, shared with us by our ancestors, is the gift of ᐱᐱᐱ, the magical element of metal linked with the southeastern portal to the Wheel of Being. Metal reminds me of the sacred union between fire and earth, between the spark and rhythm of life for the creation of beauty and mystery. The metals of the earth are offspring of this divine marriage. Thus, the metal elemental speaks to both my spirit and body, promising me the gift of evolution, of gradual development into the person my mystical vision informs me I can be.

Through the dynamic power of metal, I learn to become the smith of my life, shaping my identity as I discover the truth of who I am. Through the metaphor of alloys, I explore the ways in which to integrate my talents with those of the members of my community for the betterment of all. Artifacts made of metal, like stories shared with us by our elders, live on for many generations, often being passed from parent to child. Thus are we guided.

Ritual Crystals & Gemstones:

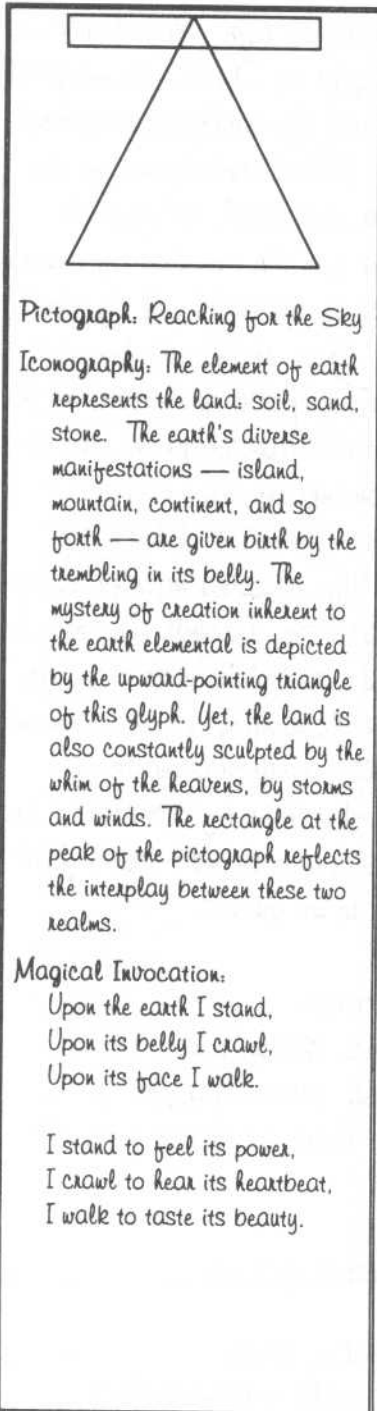
To invoke Solinari: gold, silver, zinc
To invoke Lunitari: brass, bronze, copper
To invoke Nunitari: iron, lead, steel, tin

Magical Connections:

Universal Essence:	ancestral guidance
Vallenwood:	sap
Lightbody:	Portal of Souls
Earth:	all metals, volcanoes, lava
Atmosphere:	meteors & meteor showers

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(South: Earth)



Spiritual Teaching: The rhythm of life, given to all beings by the Triple Gods, is the essence of 𐌸𐌹𐌺𐌹𐌸𐌹𐌸𐌹, the magical element of earth linked with the southern portal to the Wheel of Being. The earth elemental gives birth to all solids — for example, the physical forms of individual animals, birds, trees, and stones. This elemental, therefore, shapes, develops, and challenges my body and its five physical senses. Earth offers me the gift of stability: the capacity to be reliable, steadfast, yet flexible throughout the ordeals of everyday life. Through the dynamic power of the earth elemental, I learn to explore the abilities of my physical self and appreciate my unique identity. With a desire to test my skills and discover my potentials, I seek self-expression through doing, through initiating tasks and accomplishing goals. Earth, then, helps honor the diverse sensations and expressions of my body.

Ritual Crystals & Gemstones:

To invoke Solinari: chrysoprase, emerald
 To invoke Lunitari: green tourmaline, jade
 To invoke Nunitari: malachite, peridot

Magical Connections:

Universal Essence:	personal identity
Vallenwood:	trunk
Lightbody:	Dragon Egg
Earth:	soil, sand, stone, earthquakes
Atmosphere:	erosion from rain & air

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Iconography: This elemental expresses itself primarily through clay, mud, and earth-based pastes. The upward-pointing triangle represents the gifts of the earth and water elementals, parents to the element of mud. The oval gap in the center of the glyph's triangle mimics the mouth of an earthen jar or pot, indicating, perhaps, that this elemental contains or shapes that which enters its domain.

With the water I will feel,
Feel my dreams inside me.
With the earth I will act,
Act upon the inspiration within.
With the mud I will sculpt,
Sculpt the vision that haunts.

See this urn! It holds vision.
See this jar! It is inspiration.
See this pot! It creates dreams.

Spiritual Teaching: The dance of life, moving silently within our dreams, is the gift of **Ora**, the magical element of mud linked with the southwestern portal to the Wheel of Being. Mud is born from the sacred union between earth and water, between the rhythm and blood of life, that inner space where the universal dance of creation is felt and expressed. The various clays of the earth are offspring of this holy marriage. Thus, the mud elemental speaks to both my heart and body, promising me the gift of inspiration, of stimulation of my emotions, ideas, and talents to a profoundly intense creative level of feeling and activity. Through the dynamic power of mud, I learn to become the potter of my life, shaping the images of dream, imagination, and intuition into tangible form. In the realm of dreams with the elemental tool of mud, I acknowledge and honor the images within my spirit and release them through the movements of my body. Every time I give form to my inspiration, I am dancing with the gods.

Ritual Crystals & Gemstones:

To invoke Solinari: coral, rhodochrosite, ruby

To invoke Lunitari: garnet, rubellite, red jasper

To invoke Nuitari: bloodstone, garnet

Magical Connections:

Universal Essence: meditative awareness

Vallenwood: fruit

Lightbody: Wreath of Roses

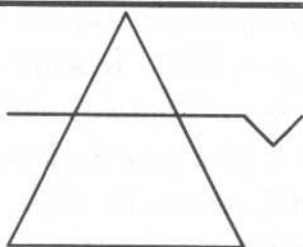
Earth: mud, clay

Atmosphere: thunder, thunderstorms

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(West: Water)



Pictograph: Eternal Flow

Iconography: The water elemental is apparent throughout Krynn, from the Sillion Sea to the Corrain Ocean. The hooked line in the center of the triangle denotes the waters covering the earth. Yet, this elemental is forever clutching at the heavens, releasing vapor to create clouds, which, in turn, return to the earth as rain, ice, or snow. The upward-pointing triangle reflects the desire of the water elemental to flow both on land and in the sky.

Magical Invocation:

I am floating on the waters,
On the waters of Krynn;
I am flowing like a stream,
Like a river out to the sea.

I am floating on the clouds,
On the clouds above Krynn;
I am floating on the raindrops,
On the rain back to the sea.

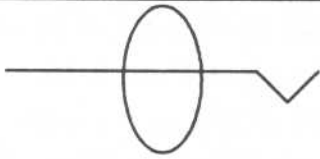
Spiritual Teaching: The blood of life, given to all beings by the gods of Krynn, is the essence of ᐱᐱᐱᐱ, the magical element of water linked with the western portal to the Wheel of Being. The water elemental gives birth to all fluids, such as the swirling eddies of a river and the silvery globes of mercury. Water reflects the emotional shifts within my heart, demonstrating how my feelings are shaped by inner desires and outside events. This elemental also offers me the gift of fluidity, of freely flowing with life situations, of easily assuming the roles that help define and develop my identity, and of quickly finding the swiftest current to healthy emotional release. Through the dynamic emotional vibration of water, I am moved to express myself through ideals, creating and establishing personal values or modifying them to suit my surroundings.

Ritual Crystals & Gemstones:

To invoke Solinari: blue topaz, fluonite
To invoke Lunitari: amethyst, indigo sapphire
To invoke Nuitari: azurite, lapis lazuli

Magical Connections:

Universal Essence:	sacred intent
Vallewood:	roots
Lightbody:	Forging Hammer
Earth:	any body of water, from puddle to ocean
Atmosphere:	clouds, drizzle, rain



Pictograph: Incubation of the Egg

Iconography: The element of fog reveals itself in the mist rising from rivers, lakes, and seas at dawn or dusk, or often as a prelude to an equinox. The hooked line of this glyph denotes the fog's power to enshroud. What does it protect? The dragon's egg, the essence of each being. The central oval reflects the personal identity, of which a part must sometimes remain unseen until it is ready to hatch and show itself to the world.

Magical Invocation:

Come cover me,
O gentle fog,
Hide me from the world!

Come surround me,
O silent mists,
Guide me to my image!

I look within, feel within,
know within.
I am hidden but from myself.

Spiritual Teaching: The silence of life is the gift of ᐱᐱᐱ, the magical element of fog linked with the northwestern portal to the Wheel of Being. Fog is born from the sacred union between water and air, between the blood and breath of life, the internal rivers flowing through my body, keeping me healthy. Mist, dew, and frost are offspring of this holy marriage; they hide that which is not yet ready to be seen, that which will only reveal itself when respect, trust, and support are provided. Fog speaks to my heart and mind, promising me the art of discernment, of knowing when to do and when to be still, of intuiting with whom I can interact and from whom I must withdraw. Through the magic of fog, I become the judge of my life, determining how much and what aspects of myself I will show others. Sound judgment, however, requires silence. Only when I listen to my heartbeat and rhythm of breathing can I remember the essence of who I am. Only then will I feel and know who honors my life and its gifts.

Ritual Crystals & Gemstones:

To invoke Solinari: black tourmaline

To invoke Lunitari: smoky quartz

To invoke Nunitari: jet, obsidian

Magical Connections:

Universal Essence: universal cycles

Valleenwood: bark

Lightbody: Twin Wheels

Earth: dew, frost

Atmosphere: fog, mist, overcast day

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(North: Air)



Pictograph: Breath of the Winds

Iconography: The element of air is never seen, just felt. Its magic animates life. Like the breeze descending from the skies to gently bend the prairie grasses, so does the breath of life descend from the gods to stir all creatures. The downward-pointing triangle denotes the gift from the heavens. The rectangle reminds us that air may come from above but it influences the earth below.

Magical Invocation:

They touch my face,
They caress my cheeks,
They tousle my hair.
I breathe in winds,
The mystery of life.

It touches your face,
It caresses your cheeks,
It tousles your hair.
You breathe in my breath,
The mystery of life.

Spiritual Teaching: The breath of life, bestowed upon all living entities at the time of creation, is the essence of ᐱᐱ, the magical element of air linked with the northern portal to the Wheel of Being. The air elemental gives birth to all gases, such as the wind and breath of all beings. It awakens my spirit and offers me the gift of motion, of affecting whomever or whatever I touch. Yet, the element of air teaches me to become invisible — just like the wind folk — to move unseen, though the results of my acts will eventually be observed, felt, and traced. Through the dynamic power of air, I stimulate myself and other people, communicate my thoughts, ideas, and beliefs, and provide the impetus for change. The marvel of the air elemental lies in the circular pattern of its life-giving power: I must inhale the breath of all creatures to live, and I exhale my breath so that all things can survive.

Ritual Crystals & Gemstones:

To invoke Solinari: turquoise

To invoke Lunitari: blue sapphire, chrysocolla

To invoke Nuitari: aquamarine

Magical Connections:

Universal Essence: ancient knowledge

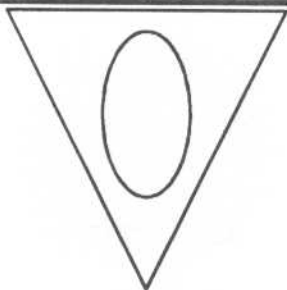
Vallenwood: seeds

Lightbody: Eye of Twilight

Earth: life breath, gases

Atmosphere: breeze, wind, tornado, hurricane

(Northeast: Hail)



Iconography: The element of hail is experienced in storms that bring snow, ice, sleet, and hail. Hence, the downward-pointing triangle of this glyph, like those of the fire and air elementals, indicates the mysteries of the heavens. The central oval mimics the shape of a hailstone, indicating the impact of the warrior self, the powerful inner voice that blends the tones of idea, feeling, thought, and belief into an inspirational chant.

Gentle as snowflakes,
Harsh as hailstorms,
The warrior is.

Gentle as snowflakes,
Harsh as hailstorms,
My warrior is.

Spiritual Teaching: The chant of life, sung by the stars and moons at the time of creation, is the essence of Yin, the magical element of hail linked with the northeastern portal to the Wheel of Being. Hail is born from the sacred union between air and fire, between the breath and spark of life that bring direction and movement to mystical vision. The crystallized forms of water — snow, ice, hail — are offspring of this divine marriage; through innovation and enthusiasm, they give permanent form to my ideals and beliefs. The hail elemental speaks to my mind and spirit, promising me the gifts of leadership: guiding other people wisely, taking charge of a situation, and seeking beneficial solutions for all involved. Through the magic of hail, I honor my warrior spirit, that part of me that makes a difference in the world through struggle and conflict. Thus, the powerful chant of hail challenges me to become assertive, principled, and willing to fight only for what really matters.

Ritual Crystals & Gemstones:

To invoke Solinari: diamond

To invoke Lunitari: crystal quartz, moonstone

To invoke Nuitari: opal, pearl

Magical Connections:

Universal Essence: divine alignment

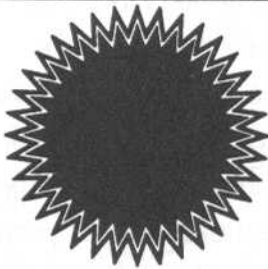
Vallenwood: buds

Lightbody: Branchala's Thread

Earth: frozen water, glaciers, avalanches

Atmosphere: hail, sleet, ice, snow

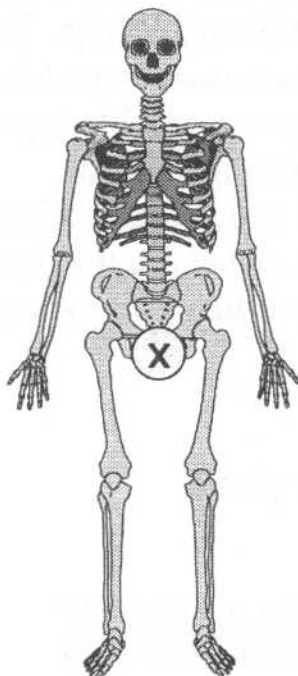
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Pictograph: Flaming Orb

Iconography: This pictograph reflects the solar, or masculine, vibration that motivates action. The dark center of the star is the source of all passions — emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual. The rays from the star denote the actual or potential expressions of those passions.

Physical Origin:



Spiritual Teaching: The lightbody of ᐱᐱᐱᐱᐱ ᐱᐱᐱ, located in the coccyx, is the physical and magical power center of groundedness: awareness of and connection with all life that exists around me. The vibrant reddish orange color of this lightbody indicates the passions and emotions that motivate the expressions of my creativity. Because the magic of Flaming Orb links me to the fertile belly of the land through my tailbone, I discover that my imagination and inventiveness are as bountiful and inexhaustible as the earth itself.

Meditation Technique: (Enhances your mystical vision.) Seated on the ground, breathe slowly through your nose and gently push that breath down to the tailbone. While holding your breath for a few seconds, envision the bright ruddy sunlight of dawn bursting from your tailbone and upward through your entire body. Gently exhale your breath through your mouth. Perform this exercise twenty times.

Afterward, tone the sound Aᐱ, pushing the vocal vibration from the place where you are seated upward to the top of your head. Tone for five minutes.

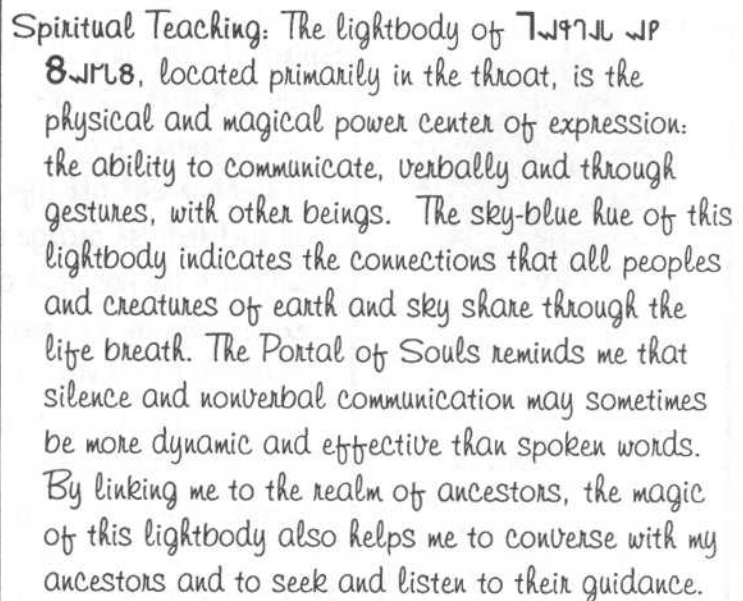
Magical Connections:

Universal Essence:	mystical vision
Vallenwood:	leaves
Elemental:	fire
Physical Body:	anus, bladder, coccyx, kidneys, reproductive organs, womb

(Southeast: Portal of Souls)



Physical Origin:



Meditation Technique: (Enhances your connection with the sacredness of breath.) Lying on the ground, breathe sharply through your mouth, sensing the rush of air passing through your throat and lungs. Then, exhale your breath in the same manner as you inhaled it. Perform this exercise fifteen times. If you feel light-headed at any time, cease this technique.

Once you have returned to a normal breathing rhythm, tone the sound OH, centralizing the vocal vibration in the back of your throat. Tone for five minutes.

Magical Connections:

Universal Essence: ancestral guidance

Vallenwood: sap

Elemental: metal

Physical Body: arms, larynx, mouth, shoulders, tongue, trachea, vocal cords

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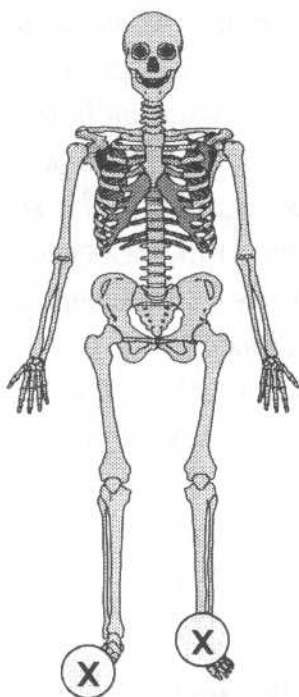
(South: Dragon Egg)



Pictograph: Dragon Egg

Iconography: The three equally proportioned ovals of this pictograph are a crude attempt at rendering a three-dimensional perspective of a dragon's egg. Despite its primitive feel, the ovals converge at the same point at the bottom of the glyph, which is the physical power source of this lightbody.

Physical Origin:



Spiritual Teaching: The lightbody of ᐃᑦᐱᑦᐱ ᐱᑦ, located at the soles of the feet, is the physical and magical power center of community support and commitment. The dark green color of this lightbody reflects the lush foliage of a forest, an image of abundance. Like a tree in a forest, I need the support and assistance from life around me — human and not-human — to teach me how to develop my potentials and extend my skills to all peoples. Dragon Egg, however, also indicates conviction and commitment, responsibility and accountability. As I am supported and cared for by my many communities — family, friends, neighbors — so must I commit myself to providing guidance and understanding to other people. The tree cannot grow, the egg cannot hatch, without such involvement.

Meditation Technique: (Improves commitment.) Stand, placing your feet firmly on the ground. Feet should be spread as far apart as the tip of one shoulder is from the other. Slowly twist the left foot into the ground, envisioning how your community supports you. Then, twist the right foot, focusing on how you wish to assist others. While performing this exercise, tone the sound ER, pushing the vocal vibration through your spine and down to your feet.

Magical Connections:

Universal Essence:	personal identity
Vallenwood:	trunk
Elemental:	earth
Physical Body:	ankles, feet, toes

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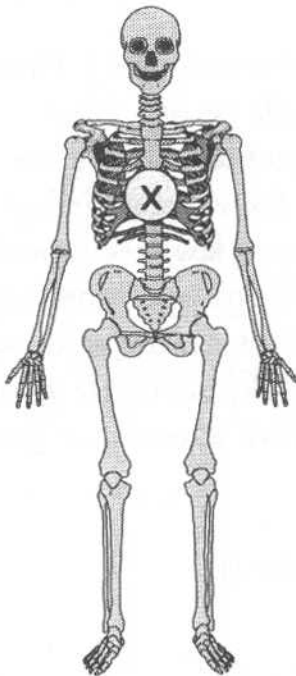
(Southwest: Wreath of Roses)



Pictograph: Wreath of Roses

Iconography: Beauty and wonder exist everywhere. Sometimes, though, great pain needs to be experienced before that beauty can be discovered or appreciated. The blossom and the thorn, these are the gifts from the Wreath of Roses.

Physical Origin:



Spiritual Teaching: The lightbody of ᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ ᐅᐅ ᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ, located in the heart, is the physical and magical power center of sharing, love, compassion, and altruism. The soft pink color of this lightbody indicates the genuine compassion I have for myself as well as the unconditional love I display to other people and creatures. The sharp thorns of the Wreath of Roses, however, remind me that not all beings move within the realm of compassion and goodness. Also, if I wish to be genuine in my expressions of love, I must struggle to relinquish my urge to manipulate others, my need to have my way, and any other unessential or selfish desires.

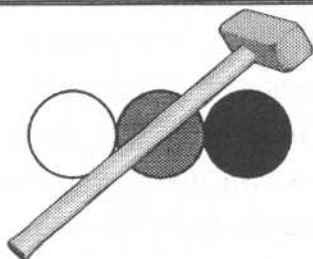
Meditation Technique: (Enhances joyful expressions of the heart.) Lying down, breathe slowly and silently through your nose. Let your breath settle into your belly, then push it gently into your chest. As you exhale, bring to mind an image of love and tenderness. Allow that image to flow through you on the next inhale. Upon exhaling, let another heart-felt scene enter your thoughts. With each cycle of breath, let a different image of love or compassion guide the rhythm of your breathing.

Afterward, tone the sound OO, allowing the vocal vibration to settle in your chest and heart.

Magical Connections:

Universal Essence:	meditative awareness
Valleywood:	fruit
Elemental:	mud
Physical Body:	breasts, chest, heart, lungs

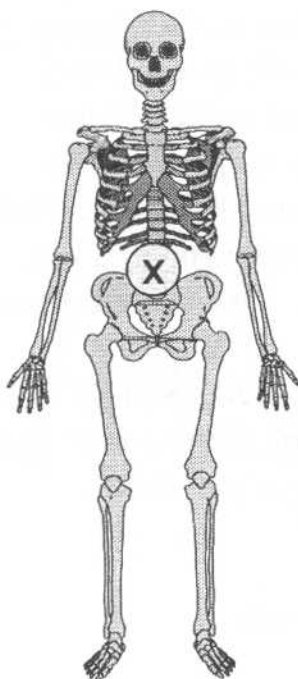
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Pictograph: Forging Hammer

Iconography: The mighty hammer of Reorx rests in the center of this glyph, reminding us that each of us is involved with the co-creative process of life. The white, red, and black circles signify our possible intentions as we create the life we desire for ourselves.

Physical Origin:



Spiritual Teaching: The lightbody of ᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ

ᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ, located in the stomach, is the physical and magical power center of vitality, strength, and stamina of the physical body. The blinding yellow rays of this lightbody indicate the formidable personal power — be it used for good, evil, or neither — that accompanies a sense of well-being. When my physical self is relaxed, healthy, and whole, I interact more effectively with other people and move with greater conviction and perseverance in everyday situations. As the potent vibrations from Forging Hammer permeate my entire body, I obtain the courage I need to endure the challenges life has placed before me.

Meditation Technique: (Develops personal power.)

Lying down, inhale sharply through your nose, holding for a few seconds the breath in your chest. Slowly, allow your breath to settle into your intestines. Then, exhale firmly through your mouth. On the next inhale, let your breath move from your chest into your diaphragm. Perform this two-part exercise ten times.

Afterward, laugh forcefully the sound HA, allowing the vocal vibration to shake not only your stomach but also your whole body. Laugh ten times.

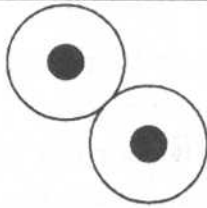
Magical Connections:

Universal Essence:	sacred intent
Vallenwood:	roots
Elemental:	water
Physical Body:	diaphragm, liver, spleen, stomach

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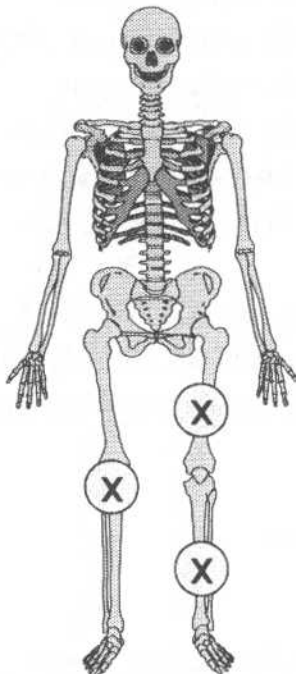
(Northwest: Twin Wheels)



Pictograph: Twin Wheels

Iconography: Though simple in its design, this glyph remains a mystery. Since the circles are not flat on the ground, they apparently do not refer to the wheels of a vehicle. At the angle in which they touch, the wheels suggest the infinity symbol, sign of Miskakal. Do they represent her disks of knowledge? Her breasts of nurturance? All is unknown.

Physical Origin:



Spiritual Teaching: The lightbody of ᐅᐅᐅ ᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ, located in the knees, is the physical and magical power center of serenity. The velvety indigo color of this lightbody indicates the nighttime sky, a time of quiet withdrawal into the wonders of the inner self. As I contemplate the nature and mysteries of my being, I discover the magical essence of the Twin Wheels: One wheel teaches me how to develop and apply my intellect, whereas the other helps me honor and respond to my intuition. In thanksgiving for the twin gifts of intellect and intuition, I pray upon my knees to the gods, making the lightbody of ᐅᐅᐅ ᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ more receptive to the divine messages and inspiration coming my way.

Meditation Technique: (Awakens the blessings of ᐅᐅᐅ ᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ.) Kneeling on the ground, breathe slowly through your mouth and gently push that breath down to the left knee, origin of intuition. Hold your breath for a moment, then exhale. Next, as you inhale, send your breath to the right knee, origin of intellect. Exhale. Perform this exercise ten times.

In a kneeling position, tone the sound EE. Let the vocal vibration flow from throat to knees back to throat once again. Tone for five minutes.

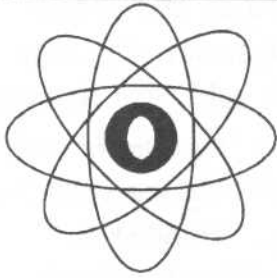
Magical Connections:

Universal Essence:	universal cycles
Vallenwood:	bark
Elemental:	fog
Physical Body:	calves, knees, thighs

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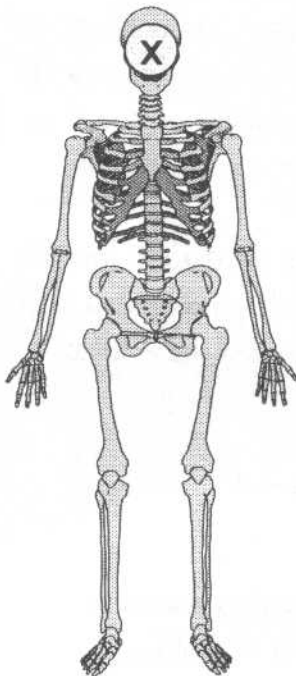
(North: Eye of Twilight)



Pictograph: Eye of Twilight

Iconography: The central eye denotes the magical power that promotes an intimate awareness of the physical and spiritual realms of life. The four intersecting ovals remind us that the origins of mundane and numinous knowledge are the eight portals of the Wheel of Being itself.

Physical Origin:



Spiritual Teaching: The lightbody of ᐅᐅ ᐅᐅ

ᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ, located in the forehead, is the physical and magical power center of spiritual knowledge, harmony, and connection with all peoples — human, kender, gnome, dragon, tree, animal, and so forth. This lightbody is often called the “spiritual eye” by scholars of magic and mysticism. The iridescent purple color of ᐅᐅ ᐅᐅ ᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ celebrates the sacred union of knowledge and logic from ᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ (the seventh portal of the Wheel of Being) with understanding and meditation from ᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ ᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅᐅ (the fourth portal). When this joining occurs within me, I have learned to integrate the desires of my ego with the creativity of my intuitive self and the sacred intent of my soul.

Meditation Technique: (Improves personal integration.)

While lying down, inhale slowly through your nose, sending your breath into the tailbone then up to the forehead. As you exhale gently through your mouth, let your breath descend from the forehead all the way down to the soles of your feet.

Perform this exercise twenty times.

Afterward, tone the sound A/E, settling the vocal vibration in your “spiritual eye.” Tone for two minutes.

Magical Connections:

Universal Essence: ancient knowledge

Vallenwood: seeds

Elemental: air

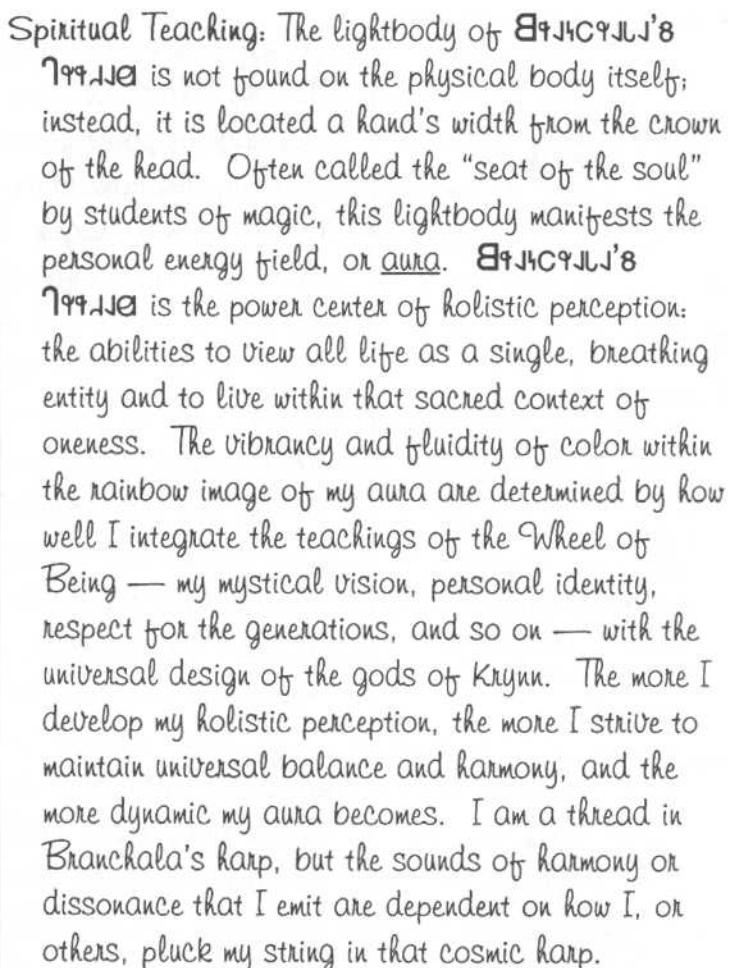
Physical Body: brain, ears, eyes, forehead, sinuses

(Northeast: Branchala's Thread)



Iconography: The arrows emerging from the horizon line of this glyph offer two interpretations. First, these are the rays of dawn, bringing a promise of new life, opportunity, and challenge. Second, they are strings in the Bard King's harp, which resonates with the music of Kyrnn and beyond.

Physical Origin:



Meditation Technique: (Honors the aura.) Tone the sound GEW for five minutes, wrapping your entire being with the vocal vibration you are emitting.

Magical Connections:

Universal Essence: divine alignment

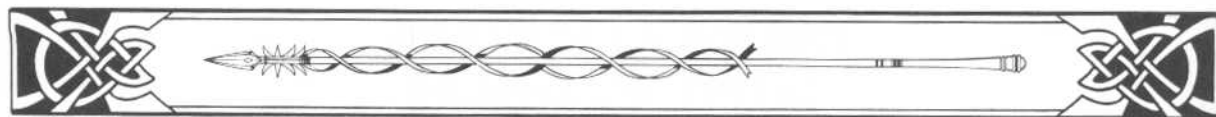
Yallenwood: buds

Elemental: rail

Physical Body: none; assumed by some to be the "seat of the soul"

Wanderlust





A Woodhen Quest

The First and Only Draft of the Comprehensive Final Report on the Long-Awaited Study on the Ultimately Tragic Fate of the Black-Crowned Woodhen of Western Ergoth, by Professor Galopaguslamarkdorwin of the Grand University of Mount Nevermind (Retired)

The reader will surely agree that the most vexing issue facing our world since the days of the great Cataclysm, the most critical inquiry in the whole of Krynn, has been the ongoing investigation into the fate of the black-crowned woodhen. Once widely known across western Ansalon as a popular quarry of Istarian priests, goblin soldiers, gully dwarves, and other peoples too mentally or energetically challenged to catch more aggressive fare, the black-crowned woodhen vanished in the years after the Cataclysm as desperate survivors of every race and culture cast aside all considerations of maintaining ecological biodiversity in favor of eating anything that couldn't outrun them.

Alas, the domesticated black-crowned woodhen was carefully inbred for generations by well-meaning Ergothian farmers, losing both the longer legs of its ancestors and the use of its wings in order to make it easy to catch—perhaps too easy, as events proved. The black-crowned woodhen, once a vital one-line sub-footnote in the multivolume encyclopedia of our continent's great history, has not been seen or heard from in over two hundred years, its loss a source of great sadness to gully dwarves in particular, who knew the black-crowned woodhen as the only creature they could catch without fear of losing their lives in the process.

But was it extinct, or merely in hiding until vegetarianism became globally mandatory? Many were the nights that I lay awake in my bed at the Grand University of Mount Nevermind, tossing and turning as I wrestled with the problem, knowing well how many of my brethren in the Bestiary, Alchemical, and Meatpacking Sciences Department had broken the fragile eggshells of their careers against this marble tabletop of mystery, failing to prove the existence or extinction of this once somewhat-beloved species of woodfowl and losing all chances for tenure as a result.

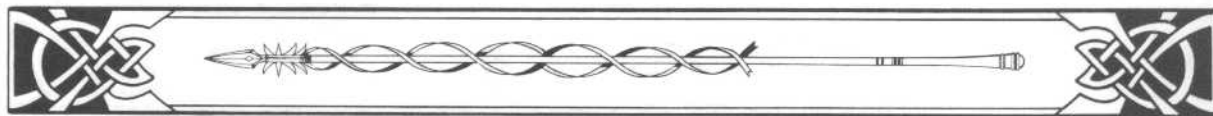
Finally, awakening from a feverish dream in which I was denied tenure myself for the third time and was forced to take part-time work with the university Janitorial Services Guild, I realized that there was only one thing to do about this critical matter: I would have to go forth with my gully-dwarf servant Frutz and find out the truth for myself.

My request for a sabbatical was granted by the Grand University without delay, so eager was the board of governors to learn the black-crowned woodhen's fate. I set about planning out the expedition, but shortly discovered that the Cartographic Sciences and Bricklaying Guild had suffered a disastrous fire in its smoke alarm system, ruining all the maps and documents stored there. I would have to travel to Hylo, capital of Kendermore on the isle of Northern Ergoth, to study its selection of nautical charts, gathered by wayfaring kender over the ages from every ship and mapmaker's business in Ansalon.

I immediately set about packing my specimen-collecting equipment and books, at once assisted and hampered by Frutz. Frutz, in his endearing gully-dwarf sort of way, managed to break all of my alchemical gear by tossing the bags out the fifth-floor window of my office by way of loading them onto the wagon bound for the harbor. Those bags not containing breakables were misloaded onto a ship bound for Palanthas. I was able to save only this notebook, a writing stylus, a carry-all bag with a few random items, and the clothes on my back.

I will not burden the reader with the boring account of our two-day journey to Hylo in the hold of a





cargo vessel full of machine parts. I have yet to get the machine-oil stains and packing shavings out of my clothing, but such is the way of things. Suffice to say that in due course I entered the Hylo doorway of Jingleburr's Worldwide Maps and Hamster Emporium—the home, said the sign out front, of the largest selection of giant hamster pet supplies in the west. Luckily, it was also the home of the most complete selection of purloined maps in the west.

Without further delay, I settled on a course. I would sail from Hylo, explore the northern shores of the island of Northern Ergoth, circumnavigate Sancrist itself with a brief stopover at Cristyne Isle, sail down the western side of Southern Ergoth, take in the minor isles of Enstar and Nostar, then cruise up eastern Southern Ergoth back to Hylo. Along the way, I would search for signs of the elusive black-crowned woodhen and hope for a sighting. I mentioned this plan to Skylark Jingleburr, a multilingual kender who swiftly became my best friend and confidant, as I pored over his maps. He gave a thoughtful frown.

"Galopagus, I thought you said this chicken lives only in deep forests."

"Woodhen, and so it does," I replied.

"Then how will sailing along the coasts help find it?" he asked. "You won't be anywhere near its real home."

"Now, that's not entirely true," I pointed out, trying not to be irritated with his presumption. "I will sail past more than a few tracts of old woodland, and it is more than possible that a woodhen might be seen on the shore. I plan to bring a spyglass for just this eventuality."

"People have been sailing up and down the Western Isles for over three hundred years, and no one's seen a wood chicken yet," the kender pointed out with an amused expression.

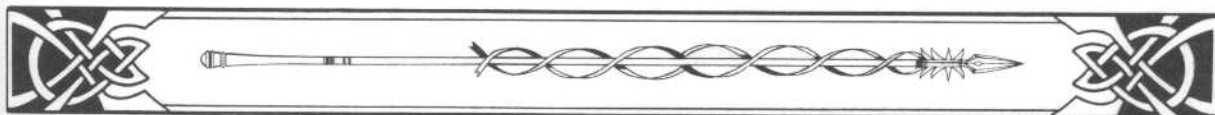
"That's *woodhen*," I sniffed back, "and did any of these mariners have two degrees in avian bestiology? I think not. They wouldn't have known the difference between a black-crowned woodhen and a three-banded bogfowl."

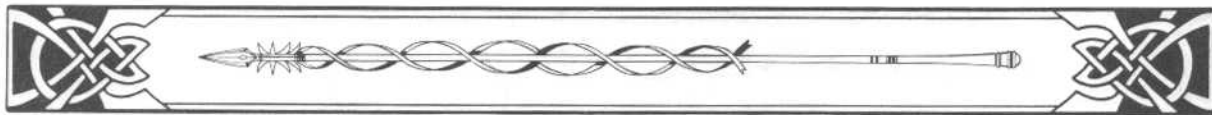
"So, what is the difference?" persisted the kender, but I had other matters to which I had to attend.

No ordinary ship would do for such a far-reaching expedition, of course, so I wrote to the Mount Nevermind Guild of Pet Fish, Sea Monsters, Algae, Drowning, Vile Things With Suckers On Their Arms, Experimental Boats That Don't Always Sink, And Other Maritime Matters Of Interest. Three weeks later I heard the joyful piercing blast of a steam whistle in Hylo harbor and saw that my pleas had been amply rewarded with the *Valiant Aftershock XVII*, the latest in a long and honored line of experimental steamships from the best minds of Mount Nevermind. My voyage of discovery would be a blessed one indeed!

The *Valiant Aftershock XVII* was all of 220 feet, a five-engined beauty that churned the water of the bay into a froth with its seven paddlewheels and four screws. Its six colorful sails and eight banks of automated silver oars brought tears of joy to my eyes. And the fins! The smokestacks! The brand-new double-weighted thermodynamic power trebuchet! It was too good to be true. Surely all the gods of Krynn had smiled down upon my humble enterprise.

I immediately directed Frutz to collect our bags—bag, that is—and proceed to the docks. We would not waste a moment, but would put to sea at once and sail to the ends of the Western Isles! Or so ran my thoughts just before the *Valiant Aftershock XVII* suffered a minor steering problem with its three triple-tiered rudders and crashed into a line of ships in their berths, sinking the first two and fixing the bow of the great steamship firmly in the third. Worse, the Solamnic legal code had just recently been introduced into local society, and kender lawyers appeared as if by magic and crowded the docks, each clutching a sheaf of papers and asking all and sundry to submit their personal injury claims against everyone down





to the original builders of the harbor docks, now dead some two hundred years.

I will pass over the next few weeks of judicial litigation and proceed to the triumphant departure of the *Valiant Aftershock XVII* from Hylo, its smokestacks belching black smoke and fire into the pristine morning sky. I'd had a chance in the meanwhile to acquaint myself with the ship's captain—a human, oddly enough. The only non-gnome aboard, he went by the name of Ekson Valdees. He nodded somberly and stared at me with bloodshot eyes as I explained every facet and detail of our mission, his attention distracted only when taking a long pull from his ever-present bottle of fermented spirits and by those occasional moments when his concentration was so deep that he appeared to be asleep.

Fresh from his morning hangover, Captain Valdees guided us out of the harbor and into the open seas of the Northern Straits of Algoni. Skylark—who had insisted on coming along—insisted now upon observing some of the sunken wonders of the world listed upon the many navigation charts we had brought with us. I gave in to his enthusiasm, but we were sadly unable to discern any sign of the three best-known examples of permanently submerged Ergothian ruins: Chillmont, Cedarmon, and Thundermont, the latter renamed Sunk by kender and gnomish divers. Skylark was greatly distressed at first, but cheered considerably later on when given the chance to give a pull on the ship's steam whistle whenever we neared the western coastline of Solamnia, quaintly called Coastlund. Great flocks of sheep and cattle fled the sound, stampeding farther inland, and Solamnic herders and farmers waved their fists at us in greeting, making the most unusual and dramatic hand gestures, most assuredly in the friendly and peaceful spirit of that nation.

At my request, we made a passage at midday close to the rocky northern coast of Kendermore, along the great broadleaf forest for which the country is famed. Kender netfishers dressed in the gayest colors waved excitedly from their small boats, and it seemed that whole villages turned out to crowd the shoreline and cheer as we passed. Crowning the sky above them all were the tops of the highest oaks, green-thorns, and flame maples, and above that were the lofty gray peaks of the Sentinel Mountains, the so-called Spine of Ergoth. A thrill of awe passed through me as I beheld their pristine wonders.

"See any wood chickens yet?" asked Skylark, waving some of the ship's emergency banners at the shore's cheering mobs.

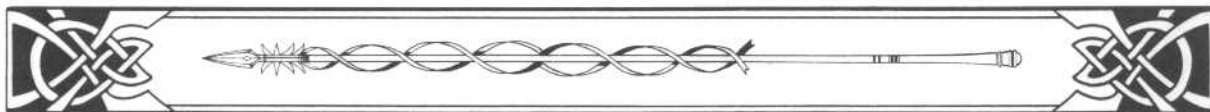
"Woodhen, and not yet, not yet," I replied, putting down the spyglass. "However, you have just signaled the world that we are on fire, sinking, and have plague on board. Put those flags away, please."

About then, I recall, I gave heed to the remarkable profusion of seabirds that followed in our wake, noting that the churning of our good ship's many paddlewheels and screws was apparently killing a considerable number of local fish, which then rose to the surface in bits and pieces to add a pungent quality to the air and also to be eaten by flocks of terns, gulls, pelicans, and so forth. I saw no black-crowned woodhens among them, of course, since that species at last report was flightless and confined to deep woodlands.

We were pulling away from the coast at last when the ship shuddered violently, nearly hurling poor Frutz overboard as he sorted through the ship's garbage pails in search of an afternoon snack. Captain Valdees, apparently awakened from a deep sleep and still clutching his customary bottle of spirits, staggered down to the tertiary backup engine room to assess the damage.

He came back about an hour later with grave news. The primary universal drive gear had come loose and squashed the chief engineer as he was engaged in a game of checkers with the cook. Replacing the gear would not take long; replacing the chief engineer would not be possible until we reached port. Meanwhile, we would have to be content with sailing a completely random course for a time. Skylark





was all for it.

We spent perhaps two or three hours wandering the high seas like a blindfolded leviathan that had overindulged in drink. All the while, the sturdy crew labored in the engine room trying to repair the damage, using the most colorful language I had ever heard fellow gnomes utter. I put it down to the bad influence of nautical life, which encourages an excessive amount of exasperation along with the customary fear and terror one expects when traveling over deep, mysterious waters.

Repairs were finished before sundown, and not a moment too soon, as we nearly rammed the rock-strewn shoreline along the northernmost coast of Kendermore. According to the nautical charts, we were passing by one of the most famous shipwrecks in the history of the Western Isles: that of the *Valiant Aftershock VI*, one of the ancestors of our own ship. Old Number Six, as it was affectionately called by its builders back at Sancrist, had made use of a remarkable radiant element in its engine, one that provided unlimited power but seemed prone to create the most terrible accidents. Alas, Old Number Six blew up right in this very area only sixty-two years ago. We were able to locate the submerged remains of the ship with ease, thanks to its greenish glow, and we held a moment of silent reflection and prayer from a respectful and safe distance. We also noted the most interesting aquatic fauna near the wreck, having altogether too many eyes, fins, and teeth for my comfort. We were careful not to tarry long.

We then went over a spot on the charts showing an undersea holding of the Dargonesti, the sea elves, but were unable to make contact with them. They appeared to have fled the approach of our ship, at about the time we emptied the garbage overboard and dumped a twice-used batch of oil from the second auxiliary engine room. We continued westward as pristine night fell from the east, hoping to round the northern cape before midnight and head south.

It was two bells—or maybe six bells, it was hard to tell with well-meaning Frutz tugging away on the bell rope for all he was worth—when we sighted a lighthouse on the northernmost cliffs of Northern Ergoth. The land here is inhospitable to all farming, thanks to the unkillable fields of grabgrass and stickvine, and only a few nomadic barbarians bother to reside here. I'd heard reports that the natives weren't the friendliest that could be hoped for (I suspect that I wouldn't be at my best if I had nothing to eat but rabbits, seagulls, and stickvine fruit), so I was unenthusiastic about Skylark's proposal that we go ashore and introduce ourselves to the lighthouse staff.

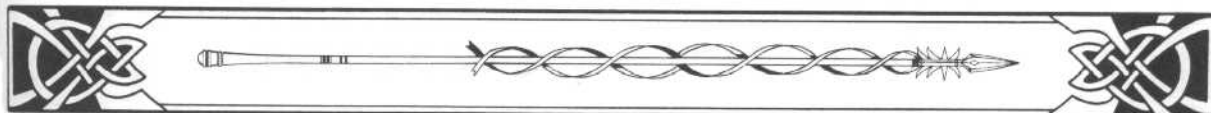
The matter was decided for us, however, when there came a great grinding noise throughout the ship, and everyone was flung to the deck as the ship shuddered to a stop. We had run aground. Captain Valdees appeared to have fallen asleep in the pilothouse, peacefully clutching his wine bottle, instead of maintaining our course. While the determined crew struggled to free the ship from the sandbar, Skylark managed to get the captain to stumble down from the pilothouse and into the ship's only lifeboat. They then set off for the lighthouse and (I assume) some form of rescue or at least entertainment.

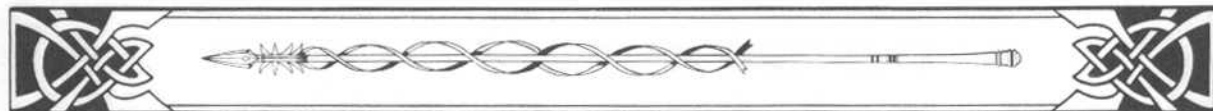
The two were gone only an hour when the lifeboat returned to the ship. Only Skylark was aboard, and he was in a grossly hyperactive state with which I was rapidly becoming very familiar. "We have to go back for the captain!" he cried. "They're holding him prisoner in the lighthouse!"

"Who?" I called from the ship's railing, as fellow gnomes from the *Valiant Aftershock's* crew paused in their labors to hear our conversation.

"Minotaurs!" Skylark shouted back. "The lighthouse is full of minotaur pirates! The captain was taken prisoner, so we have to go get him back!"

I was in the process of forming a reply, but the hubbub of the crew rendered any communication useless. I'm afraid my fellow gnomes had heard only Skylark's first word—minotaurs—and immediately





put forth every effort to escape the area by the most expedient possible means. They lightened the ship's load by dumping several hundred gallons of engine oil into the surf, which allowed the ship to float free of the sandbar, then turned the engines up to their most energetic setting and headed for the open sea.

I was barely able to get Skylark aboard by throwing him a rope. We had to abandon the ship's lifeboat in our flight.

"But the captain!" Skylark screamed at the crewgnomes, once he was aboard again. "We left the captain behind!" The crew responded by pretending not to hear Skylark or seeming to have trouble understanding him, mumbling "No speaka you language!" as they hurried off down the stairs into the myriad engine rooms, there to shut the doors against the possibility that the notoriously unfriendly minotaur pirates might soon board our ship. I confess that, despite Skylark's brave attempts to stir the crew, I was in a rather agitated state myself and had to steady my nerves in the pilothouse with a bottle from the captain's—former captain's—private stock.

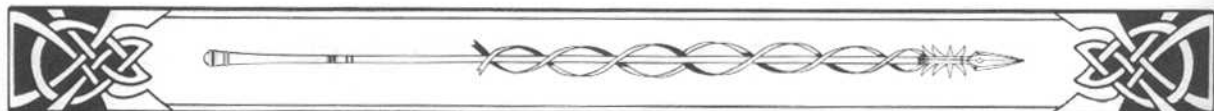
We made our sleepless way south down the western coast of Northern Ergoth as the pristine eastern sky turned rosy with dawn once more. No pirates had followed us, and the signs of civilization on the coast were welcome, indeed. A military outpost of the Empire of Northern Ergoth was sighted first, then a series of farms and fishing villages, and finally the great coastal highway that led south to the gates of Gulfport, in whose clean, cheery, harbor we found refuge at last.

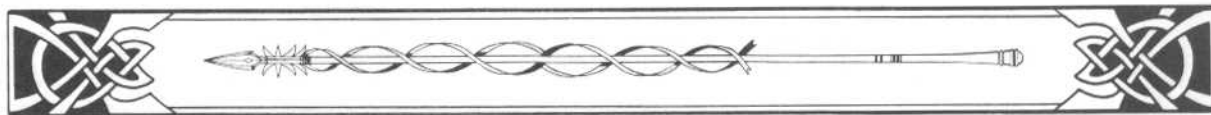
Now, I must say that the Empire of Northern Ergoth is made up of some of the most pleasant, tolerant, and reasonable people one could ever hope to meet, but when they don a military uniform they do seem to lose their sense of humor. We chugged into port and found an unused dock, but in our understandable haste to embrace civilized life once more, the crew forgot to slow the ship down and we had a little mishap that did substantial damage to the dock, two small sailing ships, and a warehouse. I believe the warehouse actually caught fire. In the confusion that followed, most of the crew was arrested by the port authorities, myself and my servant Frutz included, and we spent several nights enjoying the meager comforts of the dungeon beneath Gulfport's marine barracks. Skylark, of course, was nowhere to be found.

Right at sunup on the third day, the marine officer in charge of port security stated that we would all be released if, first, we were able to pay the heavy fines levied against us for damaging the dock facilities and, second, if we would leave immediately thereafter and promise never to return. Frutz was greatly saddened to hear this last part, as he had grown quite fond of the meals served in the dungeon (which the crew and I could not bear to taste, thus giving Frutz all he could eat and more). We swore to make our departure, were able to reimburse the port authorities from our ship's stores, mostly from the collection of rare wines that our former captain had kept in his cabin, and left before breakfast.

By the most remarkable fortune, we were able to hire on a new captain before we left Gulfport. I say "hire on," though she actually took the job without the slightest discussion of salary. I had just climbed the ladder to the pilothouse to retrieve one of the last few bottles of our former captain's stock of wine when I saw an unfamiliar young woman, obviously Ergothian despite her stylish black clothing and facial covering, rummaging through the room's nautical chart drawers.

"Ah!" I cried with joy. The young woman spun around, greatly startled, and dropped her bag full of coins, trinkets, and other items. Before she could speak, I rushed forward and grasped her right hand, shaking it for all I was worth. "You must be the new captain! One of the crew must have hired you on. I can't tell you how grateful I am to see you. We must get underway at once. The port authorities insist we shove off or else we'll be arrested all over again!"





The young woman gaped at me, obviously taken aback by my enthusiasm. Gathering herself, she nodded agreement. "Um, ah, um, certainly, we'll be off in just a minute," she said in a most pleasant though distracted voice. "I was, um, just, uh, getting my bearings in the cabin, and, uh, we'll be off and away any moment."

"That's just excellent!" I could not keep myself from beaming. "Well, I shan't keep you. Just go about your business and let's be away for the sea once more. We must find those tricky little woodhens!"

She nodded her head vigorously and said she'd need just a few more moments to herself, then we'd be off. I rushed out and back down the ladder to prepare for the departure. It was then that I discovered we were already steaming away from the docks. The crew in the engine rooms must have started the paddlewheels a bit early. As we pulled out, I saw that we'd left a few crewgnomes behind, and they were waving their arms and shouting out to the ship in vain.

I was heading for the stairs down into the bowels of the ship to tell the engineers to turn off the engines and get the rest of the crew off the docks when I ran straight into our new captain once more—literally ran into her this time, accidentally knocking her down and once more spilling the contents of the sack she was carrying.

The young woman regained her feet in a moment, then looked over my head at the departing coast and shrieked. "Gods, no! We're pulling out already! We've got to go back!"

"Yes, yes, I am quite aware of that!" I said, trying to collect her valuables once more. Some items, particularly the rings and armbands, looked remarkably like those the crew kept in their lockers belowdecks. These were certainly popular items, I reflected; everyone was collecting them.

"Then get us turned around!" the new captain screamed, snatching the sack and its contents out of my hands. "I can't swim!"

I once more set off down the stairs. I'll skip over the next two hours of haggling, threats, and accusations that I exchanged with the sub-chief engineer before it was determined that we could not go back because the crew on the shore had refused to let the sub-chief engineer take the red checkers in their last few games, which was considered a mutiny under the Engineering Guild's bylaws. Then I was forced to give up hope of recovering the dozen or so crew left back in Gulfport—and Skylark as well, since he had not reappeared since our little mishap when pulling up to the docks.

I came back up to the main deck at midmorning, where I found the ship far at sea and the new captain with her face in her hands, sitting on a coil of rope. She mumbled something over and over.

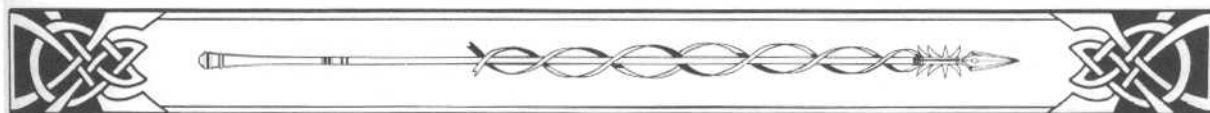
"Beg pardon?" I said as I walked up.

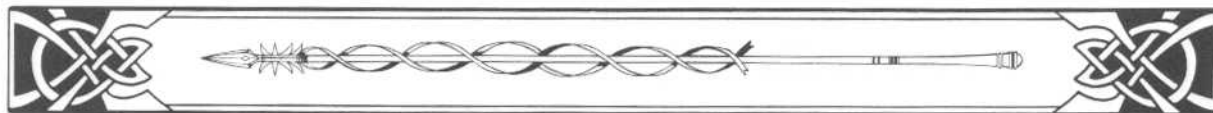
The new captain started, then dropped her hands and groaned. "I said, this can't be happening to me."

"Yes," I agreed. "It is tragic that we cannot return for our crewmates, but at least we can continue our voyage of discovery and gain fame, fortune, and an etching of ourselves on the cover of *The Mount Nevermind Enquirer*."

"That's not what I meant," she said sourly. "Just where in the Abyss are we going, anyway?"

I groaned. No one had bothered to tell the new captain about our critically important mission when she was hired on. I took it on myself to lead her (she said her name was Indrea Doria) back to the pilothouse to show her the navigation charts and our ultimate course of travel through the western islands of Ansalon. She rapidly grew more interested as I spoke, asking many questions about the sorts of ruins on the islands, what sorts of monsters lived there, what kinds of treasure the ruins had, and so on. I even gave her a refresher course in handling the ship's controls, so little used by our former captain, since Indrea said regretfully that she was accustomed to much different ships than our steam-driven one. Before long, though, she was handling the power steering





and power rudder with aplomb.

We had cruised rather far out to sea by the time Captain Doria guided the ship back on course to follow the Ergothian shoreline. I took out my spyglass to examine the coast for any sign of the black-crowned woodhen, but saw only domesticated farm animals and boringly common birds like dodos, heath hens, passenger pigeons, elephant birds, and giant moas. I even saw a great auk swimming along in search of fish; the auks would be much more in evidence the farther south we went.

Just before lunch, I saw the high spire of the palace in Gwynned appearing beyond a low hill. Gwynned is the capital, of course, of the Empire of Northern Ergoth, and a grand sight it was. Once a little farming town, the Cataclysm made Gwynned into a seaport—a story common to many modern seaports across western Ansalon. Great towers up to four stories high now rose above the skyline of the city, flags flew from every rooftop, and the docks were crowded with three dozen tall-masted ships and a hundred boats from all over the known world. Frutz took it upon himself to hail our arrival to the city by hauling on the steam-whistle rope for all he was worth, until he was forcibly restrained by the deafened crew.

We had no plans to dock, but the chance to show off the many capabilities of the *Valiant Aftershock* was too much to resist. I asked the captain to take us in close so we could make one grand sweep past the rapidly increasing crowd of sailors, soldiers, citizens, and other onlookers on the piers; this Indrea did, apparently calling down to the engine rooms for more power at the same time.

The effects of our cruise-by were unexpectedly dramatic. Our increased speed and curving course set up a remarkable wake behind the *Valiant Aftershock*, a wave about a foot higher than the piers. The air was abruptly filled with shouts and screams, bodies flying through the air and into the sea, the crash of ships slamming into docks as their deck cargo was thrown overboard, and so on. Everyone on our ship turned to look back at the chaos, and I'm afraid that our new captain looked back as well, for our ship changed course and blindly crashed into the stern of a docked freighter, leaving it sinking behind us.

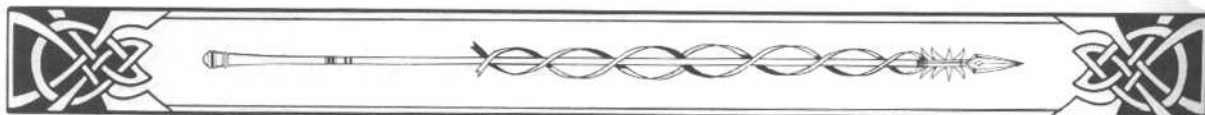
We did, however, acquire an extra passenger. He leaped onto the deck of the *Valiant Aftershock* from the regretfully doomed freighter, incidentally allowing me to cushion his fall. It was Skylark.

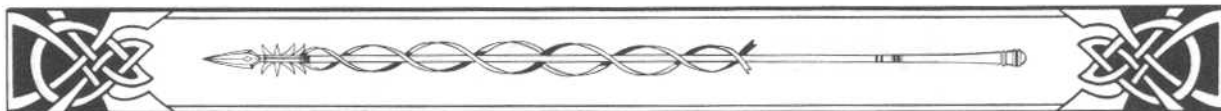
"Wow!" he cried, getting to his feet and looking back at the devastation. "This is so incredible! I didn't think you'd all be out of the dungeon anytime soon so I caught a horse coach down from Gulfport yesterday morning and was going to head back for Hylo but this is so much more convenient and I can't wait to see what's going to happen next!"

Perhaps we *could* have waited a bit longer, as the thing that happened next was that the city guard opened fire on us with catapults, ballistae, longbows, crossbows, slings, and similar long-range missile weapons. It was a miracle that none of us were seriously injured (or injured at all, for that matter). The new captain wisely chose to head for the open sea once more, and we waved a sad farewell to Gwynned and its somewhat damaged but soon to be completely repaired port facilities.

Indrea decided that we would be best served by heading westward, toward the distant sunlit peaks of Sancrist that rose above the horizon. This we did. Though I am from Sancrist, rare is the time when I've actually seen the island aboveground in daylight, and I admit to being very impressed with the grandeur of its great mountain range.

As we munched upon our somewhat boring luncheon fare, we elected to head slightly to the southwest to more closely examine a column of smoke arising from one peak in particular. Captain Doria took us in close to see the smoldering summit, and I joined her in the pilothouse to look up the spot on the





nautical charts. I swiftly learned that this mountain was called Weeping Earth, a volcanic peak famous for its frequent displays of molten lava, falls of hot ash, violent seismic disturbances, and strikingly enormous magma bombs. The spot on the chart was decorated with a profusion of warning labels, cautionary notes, and skull-shaped symbols.

I thought I might mention this to the new captain when a muffled boom sounded from outside. The sky swiftly grew dark as pitch, and the crew on deck began to shout in a maniacally agitated manner. I went to the pilothouse door to see what was the matter, just at the moment that the magma bombs began falling upon our ship.

I have no clear recollection of the next few hours, except of course for the showers of molten lava, falls of hot ash, violent seismic disturbances, and those remarkable magma bombs. It was very hard to breathe, what with the choking ash and superheated air burning my lungs, and it was completely impossible to see. When we finally escaped the effects of the eruption after what seemed like several lifetimes of mindless panic, we found ourselves drifting aimlessly in the Sancrist Straits just north of the isle of Cristyne. Our great ship was completely covered, bow to stern, with two feet of smoking ash. We were all so filthy that we looked like animated gray statues instead of people.

One of the statues staggered up to me, wiped at its eyes, and spat foul-tasting ash from its mouth.

"That was great!" said the statue. "Let's do that again! Yow!"

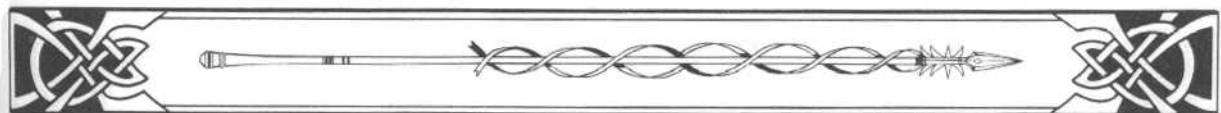
It was, I say with regret, the first time in my life that I have ever seriously contemplated murder. I contented myself with simply pushing the "statue" overboard, thus making Skylark the first among us to have a real bath.

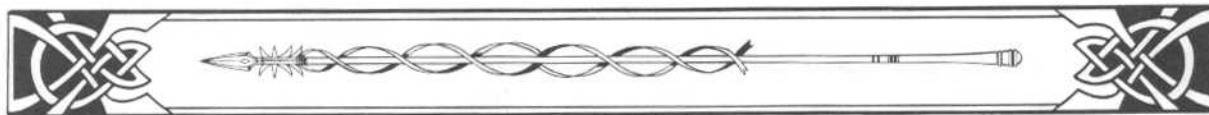
We dropped anchor just off the northeastern coast of Cristyne, below some moderate cliffs that became more mountainous to both the east and west. A peculiar thundercloud could be seen riding the sky farther inland over one bleak mountaintop—peculiar because the storm did not seem to be moving anywhere. I was in terror that this was yet another eruption-prone natural phenomenon, but I soon discovered it was nothing of the kind. Cristyne, I saw from my navigation charts, was once the home of a powerful wizard called the Magus, whose abandoned citadel still crowns the peak. The wizard is rumored to have died in some unfortunate and unpleasant manner, leaving whatever treasures he had gathered in life to rest undisturbed in his castle beneath the no-doubt magical thundercloud. I elected not to mention this to the crew, to prevent Skylark from catching wind of it and going there at once to explore.

I also noted that we were only a short distance from the site of another famous shipwreck, that of the legendary *Valiant Aftershock II*, a submersible marine vessel capable of enormous speeds thanks to its quad-mounted turbofan injection-fueled twice-redesigned outboard dynamos. An engineering oversight was uncovered by a board of inquiry after Old Number Two failed to pass its first sea trial: it had no steering mechanism. That error led the ship on a very rapid and haphazard voyage along the southern coast of Sancrist until the vessel struck an undersea rock and exploded. It is said the mushroomlike cloud could be seen for twenty miles.

As the captain and crew struggled to clean up the ship, I elected to put aside the charts and take my spyglass to see if any sign of the elusive black-crowned woodhen could be found on shore. I studied the cliffs for several minutes but saw nothing of interest other than a two-headed giant battling a pack of huge fire-breathing black dogs while escaping a swarm of wasps, each the size of a horse. Disappointed, I put the spyglass away and sought out the new captain.

I found Indrea and most of the crew forward, struggling to free the brand-new double-weighted thermo-





dynamic power trebuchet from a particularly large magma bomb. So covered with ash were they that I could identify the new captain only by virtue of her greater size.

"Ahoy!" I cried when I spotted them. Indrea turned to me and wiped at her face, succeeding only in making herself all the more filthy. "Can't seem to get a good fix on any dratted black-crowned woodhens as of yet, but if you would be so kind as to maneuver us down the western coast, there's a rather dense deciduous forest called the Baleph Wood on the far side of the Cristyne Ridge where I suspect we might find more than a few good specim—waaah!"

I was interrupted at this point when, with no provocation whatsoever, Indrea seized me by the collar and hurled me over the side of the ship. You can imagine my astonishment; aside from her rudeness, I had never suspected she was capable of such a feat of strength.

I floundered around in the thankfully calm waters until a rope struck me upon the head, and I was able to laboriously haul myself aboard again. The freshly scrubbed but rapidly dirtying Skylark was there to greet me.

"We've got to do something!" he shouted in my face the very moment I collapsed on the deck to catch my breath. "They've got Captain Doria!"

"What? What? What?" I was able to say between fits of vomiting up a gallon of seawater.

"The giant wasps! Giant wasps flew down and grabbed Captain Doria and flew off with her while you were taking your bath! We must rescue her right away!"

I looked up and managed to focus my vision on the nearby cliffs, above which I saw the very same swarm of unnaturally large wasps I'd spotted earlier, this time rapidly departing with the unfortunate Indrea Doria struggling madly in their grasp.

"By Reorx," I finally coughed out, "we certainly are having a bad run of luck with our captains. Let's head for the pilothouse at once."

When we got there, however, the third mate had already barricaded himself inside as protection from further attacks by aerial predators. Worse, the deck crew had fled below to the engine rooms, and were propelling the ship at full speed, traveling generally westward toward the northern branch of the Sancrist Straits.

Hours later, the near-riot quelled, we dropped anchor off the gentle, quiet, wasp-free western coast of Cristyne. Exhausted, we elected to spend the night there and continue our unlucky search for the woodhen on the morrow. The charts showed an old, pre-Cataclysm elven city-ruin called Baleph (no doubt where Baleph Wood got its name) only a mile or so inland. Skylark, of course, was beside himself with anticipation at his chance to explore the ruins and search for signs of Captain Doria. He was away in a nonce with six crew, the group of them having cobbled together a crude raft from old crates and rope to replace the ship's boat we had lost off the northernmost northern tip of Northern Ergoth.

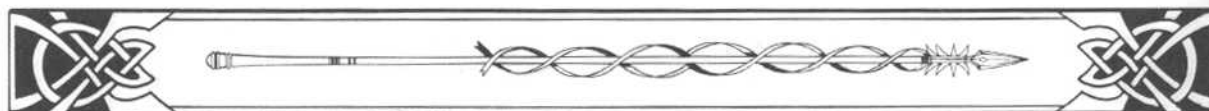
I had first watch but I'm afraid that I fell asleep almost immediately, barely even stirring until long after daybreak when I was shaken roughly and shouted at in an all-too-familiar manner by an all-too-familiar voice.

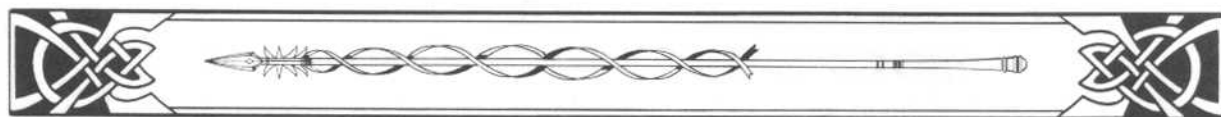
"Galopagus! Galopagus, wake up!" Skylark hollered. "Look at this! Open your eyes!"

I blinked my eyes and then beheld an enormous toucanlike avian perched on Skylark's shoulder. The sight struck me dumb (though only for a moment), as I recognized the creature at once.

"Gracious!" I gasped. "A live specimen of Bensanier's cyan chattergrackle!"

"If that's what you're going to call me," squawked the bird. "I'd much prefer Chat instead. Shorter and easier on the tongue."





"But you're extinct!" I cried. "Your habitats were destroyed during the Cataclysm! It's all documented at the Grand University!"

"Sorry to say otherwise," said Chat, scratching its beak with a blue-clawed foot, "but we missed the Cataclysm. We were west on vacation—here, actually. But enough of this warbling; let's get down to business. Skylark here says that you need fresh water, some kind of food to replace the stuff the cook has been making for you lately, your two previous captains rescued, your ship cleaned up, and a specimen of black-crowned wood chicken. That so?"

"Woodhen. Why, yes!"

"The wood chickens are all gone, so you won't find 'em here. They must really be extinct. And I'm just a bird, so I don't do cleaning work. Can't help you with your captains, either. You can collect some fruit and roots around here; the place is covered with things even you could eat. And you can collect fresh water in town, all you want, right from the old cisterns and aqueducts. Just pick up your trash when you leave and don't stay long; we have a party planned in town tomorrow night."

"Town? What town?"

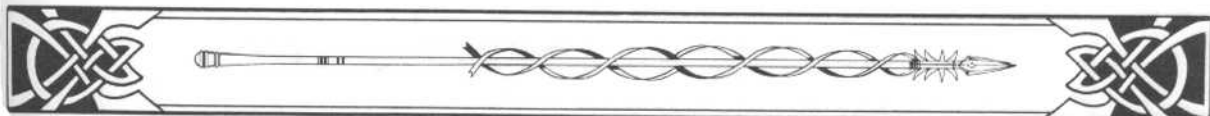
"Baleph," said the bird. "Not much good for you, all overgrown as it is, but great for us birds. At last count we've got fifteen species among us that everyone else thinks are extinct. Just met number fifteen two days ago when they flew over from Southern Ergoth, and the rest of us are throwing a little celebration for them—kind of a surprise. Don't spoil it for 'em by talking about it in town when you collect your water."

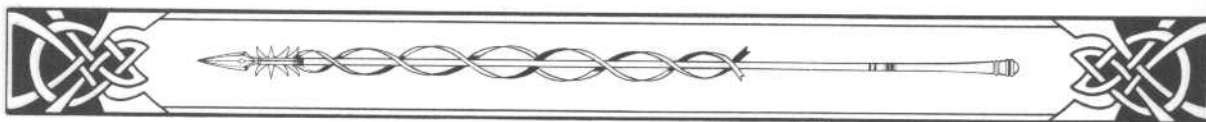
"Let's go get that water now!" Skylark said eagerly. "And then you can show me where the six crewgnomes fell into the market cistern!" A moment later, the two were over the side of the ship and heading back for shore.

We managed to get permission to stay one more night offshore until we had collected enough water, food, and rescued crew to move on. I was able to glimpse the ruins of old Baleph myself, and was staggered at the sight of so many "extinct" birds in one spot. The Taxidermy, Food Preservation, and Interior Decorating Guildmembers would have been riddled with envy and desire had they but known. I made pages of notes, collected feathers and droppings, and sketched enough individual birds to fill a notebook. I then brought all my evidence back to the *Valiant Aftershock*, where everything was thrown overboard and lost by Frutz in his attempts to help the crew clean up the ship.

I was prevented from strangling my loyal and well-meaning servant when Skylark, acting as captain protem, had me dragged back to my cabin and tied up until I regained my normal composure. By this time, we were underway again, heading westward to circumnavigate Sancrist Isle. Being tied up, I was unable to view the submerged remains of yet another remarkable historic shipwreck, that of the *Valiant Aftershock XII*, which was the first sailing ship in modern times to use no nails or pegs to secure its hull planking. Instead, a revolutionary type of glue was used that could bond any surface to any other surface, most often the fingers of gnome experimenters to anything they touched. Sadly, the glue proved on its maiden voyage to be water-soluble.

Our visit to the southwestern half of Sancrist was rather short but memorable. We were briefly held prisoner by sea elves (Dimernesti, I believe, since they had otters among them—for what purpose, I couldn't imagine) after we accidentally polluted the waters around their undersea city by shoveling the remainder of the volcanic debris from our decks. The far western coastline of Sancrist, covered as it once was by the splendor of the Gunthar Forest, was somewhat altered by our passing when sparks from our smokestacks started a minor conflagration that rapidly became a major conflagration and then a true natural disaster of





surpassing effect, for which we were subjected to intense missile fire by farmers, woodsmen, children, and even peace-loving Knights of Solamnia at the villages of Markennan, Garret, Alan, Whitestone, and Castle Uth Wistan.

We concluded our active day of travel by docking at Xenos, a pleasant fishing and manufacturing town equally populated by humans and gnomes. Xenos is unique in that it is the gnomes who go fishing and the humans who operate the machinery, which they receive from the Remote Field Testing Department of Mount Nevermind's Bureau of Devices That Sometimes Create Large Craters When Activated. This change in the natural order of things has certain advantages, one of which is that the gnomes who go fishing seem much calmer and more relaxed than all others of our kind. Some of them even catch fish.

The humans, for their part, appear enthusiastic about testing advanced experimental heavy industrial machinery, in large part because of the enormous gambling and entertainment operation sponsored by the Xenos city council. Tourists from all over Ansalon come to Xenos to place wagers on the outcome of activating a particular new gnomish device. There is, of course, the occasional and expected fatal aftermath, but there is no end of volunteers for the job because the survivors get a cut of the money wagered as well as an amazing amount of local fame. Indeed, the influx of betting money seems to be making the entire town extraordinarily wealthy.

I got a chance to wander through the waterfront of Xenos, but I bought little as inflation had driven local prices up into the nether regions of the atmosphere, so to speak. I did manage to drop by the Xenos Metropolitan Arena, where the evening's entertainment was advertised as a "triple boomer"—in other words, three separate vehicles would be tested consecutively. It was there that I met Skylark, who had an outrageously garbed young man in tow.

"I found our next captain!" Skylark cried with excitement. "He's going to make the third test tonight, then retire from engineering and join us! He knows all about steam machines! He'll be perfect!"

The young man grinned and nodded as he put out his hand. "Call me Mayne," he said, taking care to spell it out just in case I was an idiot. "Skylark's told me all about your ship. Looking forward to it. Should be a snap to run."

"Doubtless," I said. I was on the verge of asking if he'd seen anything like a small, black-crowned woodfowl in the neighborhood, but decided it would be a waste of time. Besides, the warning bell was clanging that the young man's vehicle-testing round would start shortly, and Captain Mayne excused himself and sauntered off.

I went back to the ship after that and was bedding down in the pilothouse for the evening when the ship rumbled and shook from the force of a distant blast. I heard screams and shouting very far away, in the direction of the arena, then the clanging of fire bells. I sighed and went to sleep soon after the second explosion.

An hour later, I was awakened by a noise. Skylark stood in the doorway.

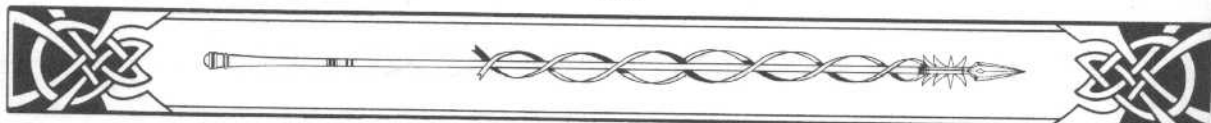
"Don't tell me," I said, rolling over to face the wall. "I can already guess."

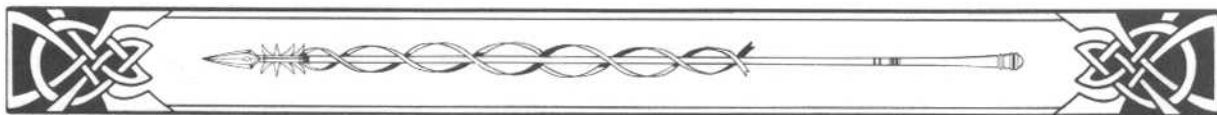
"Oh, but it's okay," said Skylark quickly. "It was over so fast Captain Mayne couldn't have known what hit him. So I brought back the only guy whose machine didn't explode. He'll be our new captain. Mr. Stainia, this is Galopagus."

"Call me Lou, you bet," said brand-new Captain Lou, who stepped into the doorway with Skylark. He sounded like a half-elf—a very humanized one. "Heard loads aboucher ship. M'ready when you are."

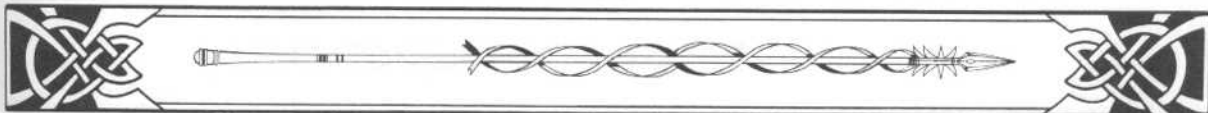
"Dawn will be fine," I muttered, then pulled the covers over my head.

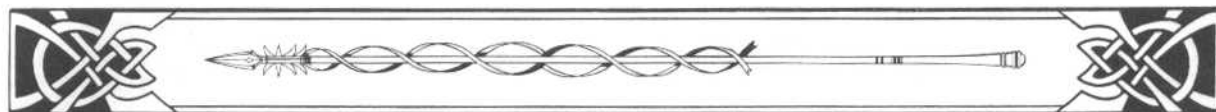
When I awoke, it was long past dawn. The ship was gently swaying fore and aft, the floor throbbing





A WOODHEN QUEST





with dissonant harmonics. We were under way.

By the time I was dressed and on deck, we were passing by the Bay Whose Name Has Not Yet Been Chosen By The Geographical Nomenclature Committee, or the No-Name Bay as the humans called it. Sea elves below in the water shook their fists at us in greeting, aroused by the noise of our ship's passing. Gulls shrieked raucously as they followed in our wake, eating diced-up fish parts. No black-crowned woodhens showed themselves in my spyglass along the barren, rocky coast—a three-horned cyclops and a draconian army, yes, but no woodhen.

It was very discouraging. I got breakfast from the cook as we rounded Sancrist and headed south along its eastern shore, and I was about to bite into my customary moonfin-and-catsup sandwich when Captain Lou—Captain Stainia was his more formal designation—called out from the pilothouse. “Interesting-looking cloud over that mountain right there,” he said laconically.

“That’s the Tower of Magus,” I called back. “A noteworthy wonder of Cristyne, but one we should . . . not . . . uh-oh.”

I realized entirely too late that the cloud over the mountaintop could not possibly have been the Magus’s Tower, which was far to the south of us. But the sight could very well be—

It got pitch-dark in no time at all. The magma bombs fell only moments later. Mercifully, the first magma bomb fell on me.

I awakened two days later in a private nursing ward in the Free Walled City of Merwick, a rather pleasant minor city-state on the east coast of Cristyne. The *Valiant Aftershock* was in the harbor being cleaned once again of a foot-thick layer of volcanic ash.

Merwick, I would say, is a city with an attitude, and that attitude is “Pay up and beat it.” Long accustomed to the dictates of money and to a strict neutrality in its politics, Merwick takes pride in having been completely forgotten by all warring factions during the recent War of the Lance, though it turned a considerable profit on war-related investments.

From all appearances a quaint and clean town half the size of Gulfport or Gwynned, Merwick is home to a number of small but well-to-do banking and merchant firms run by every conceivable being that recognizes the international value of the iron piece. I admit that I was quite shocked to see a few goblins walking past my window in fine leathers, caps, and capes, but I was even more shocked by the uniformed draconian sea captain, and I was perfectly stunned by the imperially clad gully dwarf who walked by with a retinue of at least thirty beings, all of whom hung on to the gully dwarf’s every mumbled word.

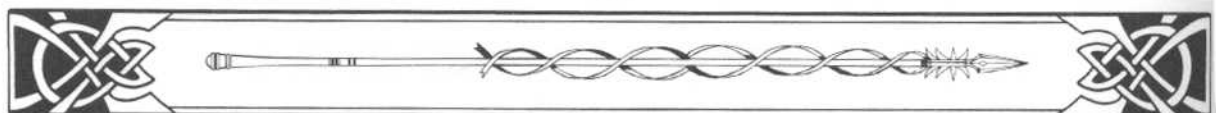
It was all the more amazing because the gully dwarf was none other than Frutz, my servant. Ex-servant, I should say.

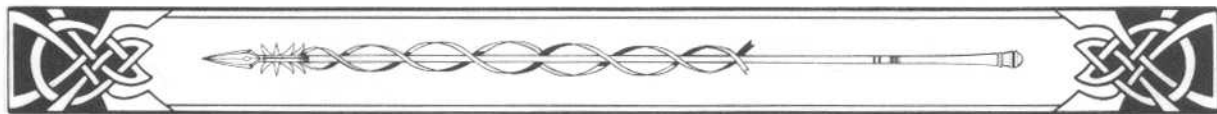
What was going on? How did Frutz get to be rich while I was recovering from a concussion? I asked this of a nurse who was preparing to feed me a nauseating medicinal tea to help me sleep (which I could do when they weren’t feeding me that awful brew).

“Oh, that’s our new exchequer,” the nurse replied, wrestling with me to force that vile mixture down my throat. “He came into town the other day and took a job collecting taxes. He was so good at it, the Lord Mayor made him exchequer and fired the rest of the revenue staff.”

This, of course, made absolutely no sense to me at all. Frutz, collecting taxes? It was impossible. The only thing Frutz was ever good at was scavenging garbage dumps for his next between-meal dessert.

“Oh, it’s simple, really,” said the nurse, who had put me in a headlock and was using a vicelike mechanism to force my jaws apart. “The Lord Mayor told the little fellow that he could have all the garbage he could eat if only he’d go to certain houses and bring back all of the iron pieces he found there. The





little one turned out to be a first-rate burglar—in and out in no time. He also did quite a bit of damage to the interiors of the places he'd visit, you know, looking around for something to eat, so it was cheaper just to pay the revenue. There, the medicine wasn't so bad, was it? Oh, blast—now I'm going to have to clean that up."

I forced myself to be well enough by the following morning to flee my confinement and make my way back to the ship, where Skylark greeted me with an enormous hug that caused me to black out once again. When I came to, we were under power and in the open sea, heading for the island of Southern Ergoth. And we still had the same captain, Captain Lou Stainia, though he had suffered a broken leg during the volcanic eruption and had not yet gotten used to hobbling.

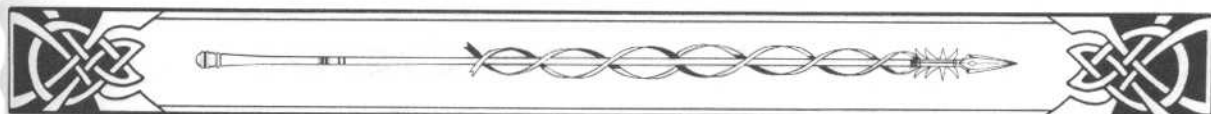
I must admit, purely between the reader and myself, that I did shed a few tears over the departure of trusty Frutz. I had many misgivings about his move into politics, but I reasoned that he would be able to handle any truly serious problems in the same effective manner in which he handled them when in my employ—by running away.

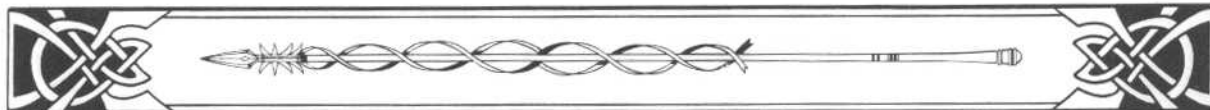
On, then, with Southern Ergoth, which, unlike Northern Ergoth, has no nation anywhere upon it with the same name as the island itself. Independent human towns, a slowly forming elven alliance in southern Southern Ergoth, and numerous barbarian tribes hither and yon are about all that're there. One set of independent towns in the centrally located Morgash Bay is controlled by ogres; goblin encampments are not uncommon in the scrub wastes of northern Southern Ergoth. All in all, it would be the perfect focus of a wildly fluctuating emerging market fund in the Palanthas Trade Exchange. Though the island was rumored to be the site of about a dozen major ethnic battles per day, we still wished to pursue our goal of investigating the black-crowned woodhen's existential qualities, so we pushed the envelope of learning further on into the great mailbox of the unknown.

Enjoying fresh weather and unclouded skies, we traveled south just west of the Southern Forest of northwestern Southern Ergoth, then sailed east up the Welmet River south of the Southern Forest (putting us in central western Southern Ergoth, in case you are following this without benefit of a map, which I suppose is putting you in quite a regretful mood right about now). The flora of this cartographically challenged region was unmatched in variety and beauty except for Baleph Wood. Turning off the ship's engines and simply drifting allowed us to view some of the more nervous avian species as well, and prevented a repeat of the Gunthar Forest episode.

It was a marvelous way to spend the morning, spoiled only when we came within view of Knight Outpost, a military encampment, fortress, and naval way station for Solamnian's peace-loving knights. (I had always thought Knight Outpost was a quite mundane name, even for a knight outpost, and a far better name for the area would have been the Ergothian Girdle Outpost, as the outpost lies along the narrow middle of the C-shape of Southern Ergoth, and I'd several times written to the Solamnian military command asking if they would consider the name change, but they never have.) Anyway, as was becoming their wont, the peace-loving knights opened fire on us after we unintentionally fouled and broke their anti-shipping chain, which they had strung across the Welmet River in an attempt, I suppose, to prevent enemy ships from fishing next to their fortress and dock facilities. We fled the area without delay, leaving behind only a minor oil slick and the usual number of dead fish.

The rest of the afternoon was spent cruising in a southward direction along the waters off the western coast of the southern half of Southern Ergoth. Though the black-crowned woodhen failed to make its appearance in my spyglass, I did observe some of the indigenous wildlife peculiar to the Plains of Tothen, a grassy prairie that is home to a rich fauna that among other things includes flightless axebeaks and





hatchetbeaks, giant leaping spiders, red-crested landsharks, Tothen worldstriders, striped nightwolves, sword-toothed lions, great silver eagles, ghost vultures, mundane varieties of giant hamsters, and the relatively rare white stag of Krynn, of which only one is known. But, as I have already noted, no woodhen.

"See anything?" Skylark asked. He was juggling some speckled prunes he'd borrowed from the food stores.

I took a last look at the white stag of Krynn, which was being hotly pursued by a tribe of whooping barbaric kender riding huge wild boars, then put the spyglass aside. "No," I said, more sadly than I wished. "Same old thing, I'm afraid."

"You need to get another hobby," Skylark observed, missing a juggled prune and knocking it overboard. "Collect rocks or something. Start a fungus garden. Go on a lecture tour and talk about your travels. Looking for this forest chicken is making you morose."

"Woodhen, and there are always disappointments in science," I said gravely, toying with the spyglass. "Even negative evidence is important, if disappointing as well. If we don't find the wood chicken—hen, then that's a critical issue in itself. Perhaps the poor little fowl is truly extinct after all. It would be the pinnacle of my Life Quest to bring a live one home to Mount Nevermind, but not everything goes the way you want. A perfect illustration of that point should be passing by underneath us about now, in fact."

Skylark dropped all the rest of the speckled prunes to look over the railing into the churning waters below, leaning over so far that I feared for his safety. "What's passing by under us?" he yelled, in typical hysterical kender fashion. "Where is it?"

Being a head shorter than my touring companion, I stuck my head through some of the lower railing bars and looked down as well. "We should be near the spot where the *Valiant Aftershock X* came to rest," I replied. "The first flying steamboat in the world, launched from Mount Nevermind only a few decades ago. Its main airbag was ignited by sparks from its smokestack; an elven merchant ship saw it go down but found no survivors. Pity the main parachute didn't work; largest one in the world, up to that time, but it caught fire as well."

"Hmmm," said the kender, turning to look at our own ship's smokestacks. "Out of curiosity, is there any chance that—"

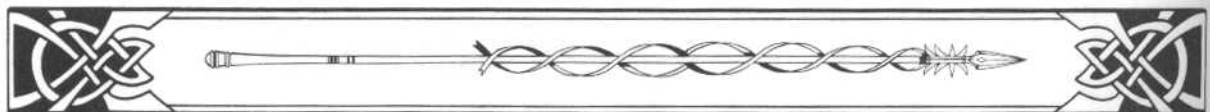
"None whatsoever," I replied, having fielded the very same question from a hundred humans. "We don't have an airbag or parachute, and we're already on the water's surface. We're perfectly safe."

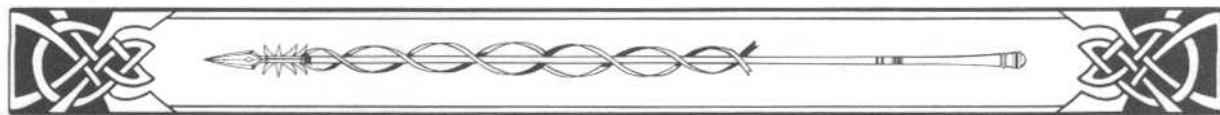
"Oh. There just seems to be quite a selection of *Valiant Aftershocks* in the waters around the western isles, and I was starting to wonder."

"Actually," I said, warming to the topic, "the waters off the coasts of the southern part of Southern Ergoth and the island of Enstar are especially thick with prototypes of this model of naval vessel. There was Old Number Five, for instance, which broke in two—quite deliberately, mind you, though having both halves sink immediately afterward was rather disconcerting. Old Number Eight encountered a waterspout in the Kri Channel between Enstar and Southern Ergoth, and attempted to close with the phenomenon for further study. Its subsequent flight was remarkable in every way given the ship's non-aerodynamic features, though of course its upside-down landing and sinking were very unfortunate. And Old Number Nine—it's rather hard to say what happened to—"

I was interrupted at this moment by the relentless clanging of the ship's forward bell. Skylark and I looked toward the bow to see what the clamor was, though I could see little right then given the mass of crewgnomes who fled past us at frenzied speed, all heading for the staircases down to the engine rooms.

Skylark, being taller and thus able to see over the mob, suddenly gasped in shock. His eyes grew to





the size of portholes and he lunged forward, struggling through the crowd of gnomes to move closer to the bow from which his crewmates fled. I gripped the railing and tried to stay out of the press.

When I was finally able to see what the fuss was about, I simply said, "Oh." Skylark, for his part, was rendered speechless as he gaped from the railing at the sight of the great herd of monsters wading in the shallow coastal waters ahead of us. There was no danger that we would collide with them, so I was unconcerned. I walked to the bow railing and recalled my early schooling on Ansalonian gargantua.

"Short-eared Tothen worldstriders," I finally said, pleased to have made the identification. "Look at the brownish patch behind the eyes, and the smattering of white spots above the nose. The long-eared Tothen worldstrider lacks both, as well as having slightly longer ears and striped forelegs."

Skylark had obviously never before seen worldstriders of any sort, and merely gaped.

"Worldstriders are actually part of the family of rhinoceroses," I went on. "They were formerly much smaller, not quite the twenty-one feet at the shoulder they are now, but the Department of Hereditary Tinkering at the Grand University of Mount Nevermind ran some experiments on a few captive specimens, and the worldstrider was the result. That large, flat lump of bone running between the eyes and the nose was actually a horn in the original specimens. Worldstriders now use that bone ridge to knock over trees, so they can reach and eat every leaf. They don't actually eat as much as you would think, however, since—"

"They've spotted us," interrupted Skylark. "The whole herd's looking." He waved back at them with both hands.

"There's really nothing to be concerned about." I sniffed, focusing my spyglass on one of them. "So long as there are no extremely loud, shrill noises to harm their sensitive ears—rather like that steam whistle Captain Stainia is blowing right now—then we should be . . ."

The beast I had focused on suddenly bolted out of view of my spyglass. I lowered the glass and noted that the entire herd of about thirty individuals was now charging into the water, heading more or less in our direction.

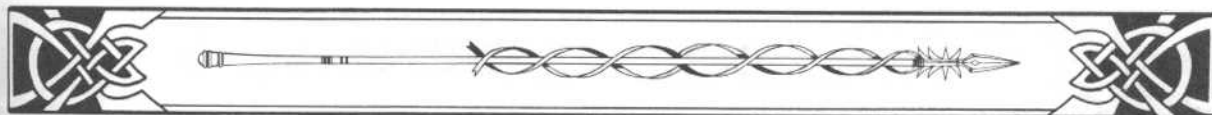
"Wow," whispered Skylark. He appeared to be having some sort of religious experience at the sight of all those forty-five-ton gargantua thundering through the waves, braying in bone-shaking roars of rage, tiny black hate-filled eyes turned directly upon us.

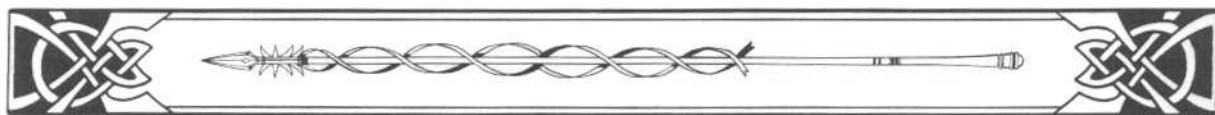
I suddenly reconsidered our situation, deduced that we had perhaps four heartbeats before the herd reached our ship, and elected to make a very rapid tactical withdrawal from the railing with Skylark in protesting tow. We had reached the base of the ladder up to the pilothouse when the entire ship lurched to starboard with a terrific series of crashes and roars that beggars any attempt to describe them further.

The *Valiant Aftershock XVII* was rolled almost completely onto her beam-ends, which is a nautical way of saying the worldstriders knocked our ship flat on its side. Everything that was on the deck was hurled into the sea, with the exception of Skylark and myself. I lost my spyglass, but it was of little consequence since I had a dozen more in my surviving carry-all bag.

More importantly, I had grave doubts that Old Number Seventeen would be afloat for much longer, or that I would be around even a heartbeat longer myself to find out, as one of the short-eared Tothen worldstriders managed to put its cottage-sized head over the railing above my own very small head and bray out its anger through frontal cropping incisors as large as Sancrist's mountains, or so they seemed to me as I was only three feet away from them. I was struck with the thought that it would take very little for the beast to inhale me in, and only a moment more to swallow.

But such was, thank the gods, not to be. Satisfied with their vengeance, the worldstriders moved back. The ship slowly rolled back to port and pulled away, listing badly and making the most terrible noises





from its port paddlewheels and automatic oars, which were of course completely destroyed. Engines at full speed, we managed to escape to deeper waters, though we found ourselves traveling in a large circle that would eventually bring us back to the herd of worldstriders, still standing guard in the surf.

I will gloss over the next few hours, as we finally managed to get the ship under control and limp onward toward Thunder Bay, where we hoped to seek safe haven with the Silvanesti, Qualinesti, and Kagonesti elves. I'm afraid I must also gloss over our visit with the elves too, as they were less than enthusiastic at the prospect of having a damaged, oil-leaking steamship full of gnomes drop anchor at the confluent mouth of the sacred Thon-Sorpon and Thon-Tsalarian Rivers. We were forced to make repairs and leave the area in only a matter of hours, hotly pursued by elven sorcery and warcraft of every sort.

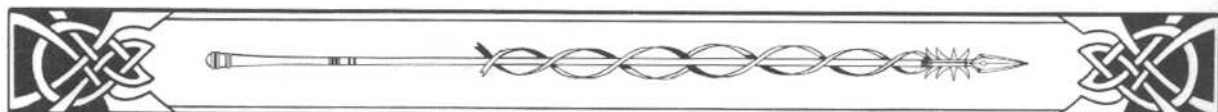
It was about two hours after midnight when we dropped anchor once more, this time off the northern coast of Enstar. The ship was listing to port only five degrees, and the pumps were operating at better than fifty per cent efficiency. Two engine rooms had to be sealed off and abandoned, and we had lost one paddlewheel, the entire port bank of automatic oars, and one smokestack. We were still more than blessed that a surge of water did not flow into an active engine room, as I later calculated that the boiler explosions would have been audible over the entire reach of the Plains of Tothen up to the Last Gaard Mountains, the latter of which would have been showered with metallic fragments from our suddenly nonexistent vessel.

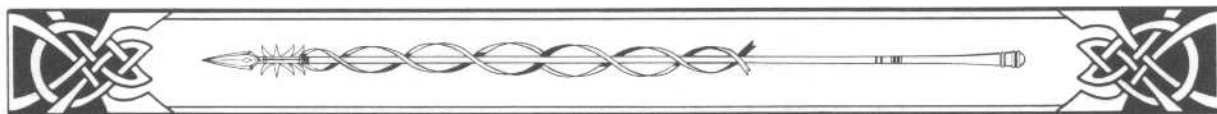
I should also mention that we also lost Captain Lou Stainia—our fourth captain so far if I count the one in Xenos who didn't even manage to board the ship. Assumedly the only fatal casualty among our crew, Lou Stainia was thrown overboard when we were struck by the worldstriders, and I was able to do nothing more for him than offer a prayer to Reorx that he at least made it to shore. Skylark felt as bad about the captain's loss as any of us, though we never did get to know that one very well, but the kender did allow that this day had otherwise been the most exciting (and, therefore, the best) on the trip so far.

The aforementioned pristine fingers of rosy dawn found our entire crew asleep as the pumps throbbed and rumbled belowdecks, our ship bathed in the gentle breezes of the so-far temperate weather. The dawn also found our hardy ship boarded by curious fishermen from Hovost, a fishing village belonging to the Confederates of Enstar. The Confederates form the only political group on the island of Enstar, being a peaceable people who all share a bit of elven heritage. Perhaps because of this—or in spite of it, given our reception at Thunder Bay—the Confederates proved to be far more peace-loving than the Knights of Solamnina who seemed bent at every turn upon our immediate extinction. With great care and consideration, the fishermen woke us, tended to our many wounds, and placed us under arrest for fouling the sea with fuel oil. (We had been unable to find the source of the leak that had resulted from our literal run-in with the worldstriders.)

Luckily, our crew was able to locate and repair the source of the leak with sufficient prodding from the fishermen, who then invited Skylark and me to Hovost. The invitation was not optional, as there were a few financial matters to settle in recompense for the damage to the local fishing supply from our oil leak, but I elected to make the best of things anyway. Skylark was pleased beyond words to visit the shore, despite the curious insistence of the fishermen that we first discard all gold and electrum coins that we carried in our pockets—which fortunately were not many. Steel, silver, copper—they didn't care about those. Only the gold-bearing items had to go. What did one expect from backward people but backward customs?

The visit went far better than I had dared hope. The Confederates are led by a local council composed





of five town mayors, one from each village in the organization, with the council head being a position that rotated yearly among the mayors. The mayor this year was Maergrit the Wise of Hovost, which was good for us since the leader last year had been Arvid the Brutal of Dai, and next year's would be Dorsin the Leg-Breaker of Rantil. Maergrit was most gracious to us, holding court in a manor home that appeared to have once been a large barn, and finally judging us to have ruined the local fishing out of ignorance and accident, not out of maliciousness, so the death penalty could not be fairly applied no matter how reasonably the fishermen argued in favor of it.

As it was, Maergrit was forced to choose between having us cast into the endless depths of the Sink, a vast cavern system in the low hills of Enstar rumored to be filled with the most horrible sorts of subterranean creatures, or allowing ourselves to be made slaves of the Giant of Enstar, a reptilian monstrosity that confined itself to the southern end of the island. If we liked, we could even pick our fate and make the job easier on her conscience.

I had given up hope of ever getting tenure at the Grand University and was about to speak out in favor of the Sink, since I have a smattering of knowledge about spelunking, when Skylark made a counterproposal. "I was talking with Vaergirin here," he said, indicating one of the farmers, "and he said that a wild beast roams the hills and moors south of here. Send poor, innocent Galopagus back to the ship, and I will go south and find out what sort of beast is troubling you and then trap it and bring it back."

I could have been knocked over with a feather to hear Skylark make such a heroic offer, and my voice failed me entirely. "Very well spoken," Maergrit responded, nodding. "You may set out tomorrow morning. We will take your professor back to his loud and dangerous ship, and he may depart from our waters forever. You yourself may proceed south and discover what you can of the beast, but take care not to attract the attention of the Giant of Enstar, as he has been on the moody side for the last two decades following the loss of his treasure hoard."

With that, we were shown to a spartan but clean cell and left for the night to ponder things. "Whatever possessed you to say that?" I asked as soon as the guards were out of hearing.

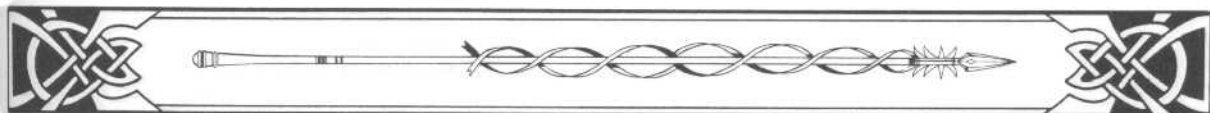
"Don't worry about it," Skylark said with a smile. "I was reading some of the charts earlier, and there's an old elven ruin called Daleth on the west coast. I remember hearing about a colony of druids who recently went to Daleth to set up a secret enclave there, and I know enough about druids to know that lots of them can change shape into animals. The Beast of Enstar is probably just a druid trying to scare people away from the enclave. Get it? I'll just find a druid and expose its shenanigans. Just have the ship come around and pick me up at Daleth as soon as you can."

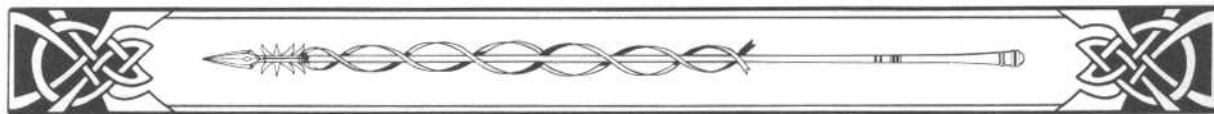
"That doesn't make any sense," I said. "If the druids are really trying to chase everyone away from the ruins, won't they dislike finding you on their doorstep?"

Skylark smiled more broadly. "One of the druids who went to Daleth was my cousin Dewberry. I trust she'll be happy to see me."

The kender's cleverness amazed me. He seemed to have things so well in hand that I could think of no alternative but to proceed as he had outlined. The next morning I was given a pleasant breakfast and taken by boat back to the *Valiant Aftershock XVII*. Skylark waved good-bye with a good deal less concern about the situation than I felt myself. Once aboard, I became the *de facto* captain (which for obvious reasons also caused me great concern), and I ordered the ship to circumnavigate the island.

Our voyage was quiet enough, though I was so troubled at the possible fate of my companion on shore that I could barely concentrate. I scanned the low, grassy coast for signs of the black-crowned woodhen, but my heart was not in the quest. I felt a flicker of interest when I caught sight of what must have been





the accurately named Giant of Enstar, which looked for all the world to be an enormous brass-colored draconian, a baaz of incredible size. While the crew immediately fled belowdecks and encouraged greater speed out of the ship's damaged systems, the twenty-foot-tall baaz took little notice of us, instead sitting on a rocky outcropping near the shore in an attitude of exhaustion or despair. Feeling it best not to investigate, we moved on with all speed.

We rounded the southern cape before noon, frightening away a tribe of sea elves at the same time (Dargonesti, I believe), and headed north toward the ruins of Daleth on the west coast. We were there in another hour, dropping anchor after carefully checking for unfriendly wildlife or fishermen. None being present, we rested nervously and eyed the array of ancient columns and broken walls that marked the once-proud elven city of Daleth, thrown down over three hundred years past by the Cataclysm and now a relic that sailors instead of horsemen admired.

It seemed that ages went by as we waited. Lunchtime came and went, and supper followed thereafter, then dusk and nightfall. I made several calculations showing that Skylark, at normal walking speed and allowing for the surface conditions of grass, soft ground, and low hills, would arrive at our location in another three days—Hovost being about fifty miles north of Daleth, by our charts. This did not set my mind at ease, but I managed to get some sleep nonetheless.

It was midmorning the next day when, as I was examining a nesting colony of great auks by spyglass, when I heard a distant shout from the ruins on shore. I trained my spyglass there and to my pleasure—and surprise, for he was early—beheld the figure of Skylark, standing among a pile of fallen columns, waving both arms in the wildest fashion. I gave orders at once for our ship to move in closer and for the patchwork raft to be lowered and sent ashore to recover our friend. I went with the raft crew to welcome Skylark personally, so glad was I to see him safe and sound.

Our raft was nearing the shore when Skylark's attention was drawn away from us to something behind him. In an instant, he leaped away and ran for a standing pillar, climbing it so rapidly that I wondered if he was using some magical device to aid him. I searched and searched but saw nothing that would have driven him on in that way. Besides, I knew as well as anyone that kender fear nothing—living, dead, or otherwise.

We landed on a slimy rock slab that had once been a domestic elven courtyard, pulling the raft partway from the water. "Skylark!" I shouted at my friend on the pillar. "Let's be off! Hurry down!"

"Can't do it!" he shouted back. "Have to wait!"

I was confounded. "Are you mad? We can't stay here! We've got to get . . . What's that?"

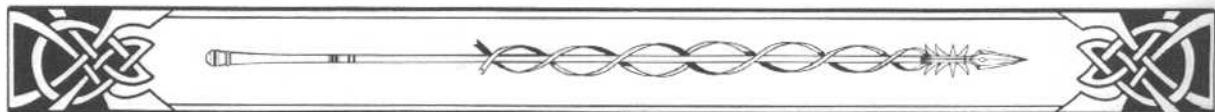
My attention was drawn to a spot only forty feet away, where a golden-furred, multilegged creature the size of a large badger suddenly appeared from the rubble. It gleamed so beautifully in the sunlight that for a moment it fairly took my breath away.

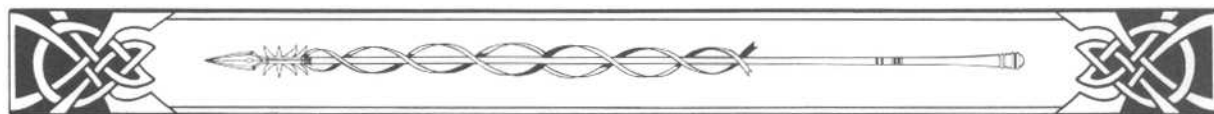
Then a picture from an Ansalonian bestiary surfaced in my mind, and I knew right away what the golden-furred creature was. And why Skylark had climbed the pillar. And why the fishermen had made us leave behind our gold coins rather than bring them ashore. And what had happened to the (gold, I assume) treasure of the Giant of Enstar. And what the Beast of Enstar had to be.

And how long my life expectancy would be if that creature caught me. With luck, I'd last about one heartbeat before it turned me into an extraordinarily messy form of confetti.

"Get out of here!" I shouted to the crewgnomes. "Monster!" To their credit, the gnomes needed no further encouragement than that to leap into the makeshift raft and shove off. Not at all to my credit, I tripped and fell on the algae-slimed stonework, missing my chance to escape.

And then it was me and the aurumvorax, which had sighted me and was coming in my direction at a





cautious pace.

"Skylark!" I screamed. I hadn't meant to scream, as I'd always felt screaming was undignified, but there was really little choice and dignity meant less to me now than instant survival. "Skylark, throw your gold at it! Hurry! Skylark!"

"Why?" he yelled back. "Besides, I don't have—"

"YES YOU DO HAVE GOLD YOU IDIOT CHECK YOUR POCKETS AND HURRY UP FOR THE LOVE OF REORX JUST THROW IT AT THE MONSTER SO IT WILL EAT THE GOLD INSTEAD OF ME BUT HURRY BECAUSE IT CAN SMELL GOLD JUST HURRY SKYLARK HURRY THROW THE GOLD THROW THE GOLD THE GOLD THE GOLD THE GOLD!!!"

All dignity fled, I scrambled away from the beast as fast as my legs could go—which was unfortunately much too slow—over algae-covered rock.

The aurumvorax—whose name, by the way, is from an ancient tongue and means "gold eater," an element which it can sense for miles and which the deceptively powerful aurumvorax will happily consume in great quantities, tearing into shreds any foolish being that annoys it or gets between it and its golden meal—the aurumvorax managed to get within ten feet of me, moving along quite swiftly on those dozen or so legs it has, its bearlike face snarling with the most incredible array of razor-sharp gold-colored fangs, when a small golden chain smacked the rock directly in front of it with a tiny metallic jingle. The aurumvorax stopped dead, of course, sniffed the chain, then began to eat it in complete contentment.

Or at least that's what I assume it did, as I was unable to watch it because of my hasty departure from the area. Without further delay, Skylark and I had snatched a fallen log, thrown it and ourselves into the water, and were swimming against the waves with every ounce of our strength to reach the *Valiant Aftershock XVII* before the panicked crewgnomes got aboard and took off without us.

"Sorry about the chain," Skylark gasped out once we were safely aboard again and could lie drenched and exhausted on the deck. "Had it in my pocket. Forgot about it. Don't know where I found it."

"Quite all right," I gasped back. "How was Dewberry?"

"Fine," he panted. "Met her just outside Hovost. She was a cat. Druid specialty, shapechanging. She found a goat. Put a spell on it. Had it take me to Daleth. Said to watch out for the beast of Enstar, don't take any gold near it. Didn't say why." He took a deep breath and sat up, recovering. "I met the beast right outside Daleth. It looked so wonderful. However, it ate my goat."

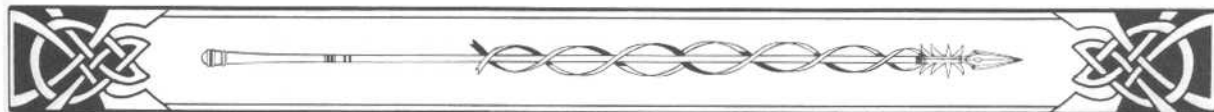
"A shame." I meant it. I felt sorry for that goat.

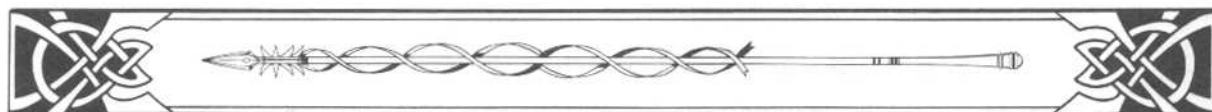
Skylark nodded. "I feel a little guilty because I couldn't take the beast back to Hovost like I promised. But Dewberry said that would be grievously dangerous. I wish she had been more explicit."

Skylark looked around, then squinted westward. "Is that a storm?"

It was, and the reader will forgive me if I skip over the next day and night as the cyclone howled around us. I took it rather philosophically. The woodhen must not want to be found at all, I reasoned, so it had enlisted the help of one or more of Kryn's gods, getting them to do everything possible to keep the existence of the woodhen secret for all time while punishing those who tried to uncover its whereabouts. It made sense to me, at least while I was clinging to the steering controls inside the pilothouse while mountainous waves crashed over the deck and lightning split the howling darkness once every two heartbeats for hours on end.

The storm dragged us all over the Sirrion Sea and finally deposited us on the beach of the island of Nostar, where we were promptly attacked by a fire-breathing sea monster. It was all quite anticlimactic, really. I recall laughing hysterically at the serpentine beast as it tried to bite my head off, before it was





driven away by the ship's crew, led by Skylark, all wielding mechanical parts and tools from the engine rooms. The crew then had me put to bed for another day or two until I recovered some of the scattered jetsam of my reasoning faculties.

The reader may understand, then, my jaded reaction when Skylark returned from exploring the island and told me that there was a ruined elven fortress nearby called Castle Dread, inhabited by a talking woolly mammoth who said there was an undead wizard in the castle dungeon, and local people claimed that this island had not one but two ferocious beasts hiding upon it, neither of them related to the talking woolly mammoth, who had recently been made the island's king.

"Any sign of a black-crowned woodhen?" I asked.

"Not one," said the kender.

"Then let us leave at once," I said, and went back to sleep.

I sat in the pilothouse all the next day, listlessly thumbing through the nautical charts. The words and symbols on them had become meaningless. Whenever I went to sleep, I had disturbing dreams in which enormous mutant black-crowned woodhens waded out to my rowboat and tried to peck me to death. Skylark did his best to cheer me up, but without success. My chances for tenure at the Grand University were lost forever.

The *Valiant Aftershock XVII* suffered a minor mechanical breakdown in the Straits of Algoni, just off the southeastern tip of Southern Ergoth. Skylark ordered the ship to drop anchor while repairs were made. I idly watched the shoreline, noting through my spyglass the presence of yet another ancient ruined elven city—Shrengal, according to the charts—and the presence of some minor figures among the ruins.

I had to focus to make out their identity. Aghar—gully dwarves. A fair-sized colony of them, too. I thought of Frutz and wondered how he was doing as exchequer in Merwick. Perhaps he could reference a job for me there as a clerk or janitor.

Skylark entered the pilothouse and smiled when he saw me. He must have thought I was coming back to my old self again. I watched the shore a few minutes longer while Skylark chatted on and on about the time-consuming repairs to the polyharmonic drive-shaft regulator. Some of the gully dwarves had come down to the rocky beach to stare at our ship. One of them had brought a black-crowned woodhen with her and was holding it aloft so it could see more clearly over the heads of the other gully dwarves.

"See anything?" Skylark asked after a pause.

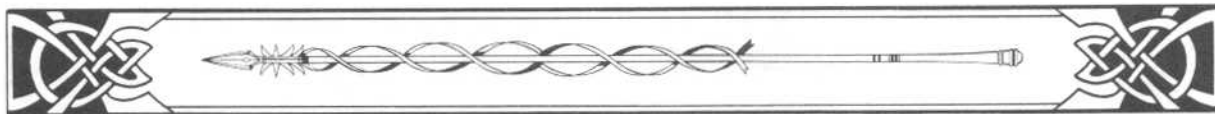
I handed the spyglass to him and put my head down on my arms, folded on the windowsill. "No. Same old thing."

Skylark was trying to focus the spyglass on the gully dwarves when it hit me. The next thing I knew, I was out of the pilothouse and leaping off the port railing, screaming at the top of my lungs as I dropped toward the green water below.

I do not clearly remember swimming to shore, though Skylark says I was remarkably fast for someone who was fully dressed and wearing boots. I thrashed at the water, cursing it for holding me back from my dream, my tenure, my life, my lovely, long-sought black-crowned woodhen. When I made it to the coast, I was so exhausted that I collapsed unconscious at the startled gully dwarves' feet.

Skylark tells me that he got to shore as quickly as possible to explain the situation to the Aghar, who were enormously pleased that someone would sail across the ocean just to see them and their black-crowned woodhen, which they averred was the last of its kind. A celebration was scheduled for that very evening, with myself and the black-crowned woodhen as the guests of honor.





I was told of this later, as I said, because I had fallen into a feverish state in which I was unable to distinguish clearly between reality and dream. I called aloud for the hen many times—Skylark says I had named it “Rosebud” for some reason. When I recovered, Skylark and the gully dwarves were there to confirm that I had indeed seen the black-crowned woodhen, and my quest was at last at its end.

The whole ship’s crew was invited to the celebration, which was hosted by the local Highbulp of the gully dwarves, a bald and cheerful character named The Dunald. The Dunald was a remarkable figure among the Aghar, as he had studied politics and military matters in a foreign land (my bet was at Merwick) and had brought everything he’d learned back to share with his fellows.

As a result, the Aghar had renamed Shrengal, now calling it Canado—their version of “can do,” a very upbeat philosophy indeed. Moreover, they had formed a parliamentary democracy with The Dunald as the head, though I must admit that I could not tell any difference between their form of government and any other Aghar colony I had ever encountered, which is to say that it was completely chaotic and ineffective.

Best of all, however, the Aghar here had made the last surviving black-crowned woodhen their national bird, and had treated it quite royally for the five years since it had hatched. And they were giving the bird to me, Professor Galopaguslamarkdorwin, no strings attached. I wept unashamed.

The celebration was all you would expect from your average gully-dwarf clan—terrible food, vile drinks, awful dancing, discordant music, a disgusting lack of all civilized behaviors, and no napkins. I loved it. Skylark and the crewgnomes loved it, too, but they brought their own food and drink from the ship. I didn’t care. I ate everything the gully dwarves brought me, drank from every cup, danced with every gully-dwarf maiden, even tried playing some of their musical instruments, which were merely different sorts of rocks. It was a fabulous evening.

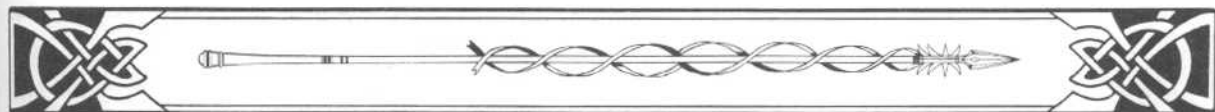
It was long, long past midnight when I at last began to feel the heavy oliphant of exhaustion settling into my travel-weary bones. Sighing, I removed a half-empty cooking pot from my head, shooed a giggling gully-dwarf maiden from my lap so she would stop licking my ears, and asked The Dunald for my prized black-crowned woodhen, with whom I would return to the ship and sleep the sleep of the just and the triumphant, ready to return on the morrow to Mount Nevermind with my Rosebud—to gain my long-overdue university tenure.

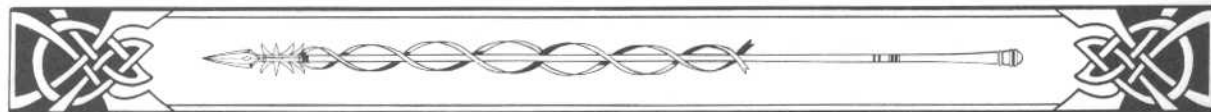
The Dunald grinned from ear to ear, looking remarkably like a badly carved honeydew melon, and slapped me so soundly on the back that he knocked me into my clay dinner plate. “You like, yes? You like chicken much, yes?”

“Woodhen, and yes, I like very much, yes. Now I would like to take it back to the ship, please. You have been most kind.”

The Dunald shrugged and laughed, calling out a command to the gully dwarves who sat to either side of us. Skylark, who sat across from me at the dinner table—dinner rock, really—suddenly spat out a mouthful of the speckled prune juice that he had brought with him from the ship, then began coughing as if he had inhaled the whole cup. He pointed at The Dunald and tried very hard to communicate intelligibly as he was coughing, succeeding only in wheezing so much that his face turned a stunning shade of lavender.

Gully dwarves scrambled around us on all sides, cheerfully pounding Skylark on the back or picking up some of the litter on the ground. “You like much, much, much?” shouted The Dunald gleefully, adding assorted commands to his fellows in Aghar, which I confess I never understood. Foreign languages were never my strong point.





But Skylark spoke all languages fluently. Even Aghar. He leaned across the table toward me, unable to breathe and signaling with what I could describe only as desperate, violent urgency. I quickly poured another cup of speckled prune juice and offered it to him, hoping I had interpreted his gestures correctly. He seized the cup and drank it, instantly having an even more theatrical choking spasm just as I realized I had accidentally poured him a cup of gully-dwarf "stew" instead. The gods alone knew what was in it.

The gully dwarves finished piling up bits of trash into a pile on a clay plate in front of The Dunald, and The Dunald carefully and with great ceremony pushed the plate over in front of me.

The plate was filled with chicken bones.

"You like much, you take!" cried The Dunald, spreading his arms. All the gully dwarves began to cheer in a wild, ragged chorus.

I stared at the plate. I had not yet comprehended the exact nature and purpose of their offering.

"Oops," gasped the resuscitated Skylark.

I looked from Skylark to the plate, then back to him, then at the plate, then at The Dunald, grinning and excited and pleased, then at the plate of chicken bones before me.

Chicken bones.

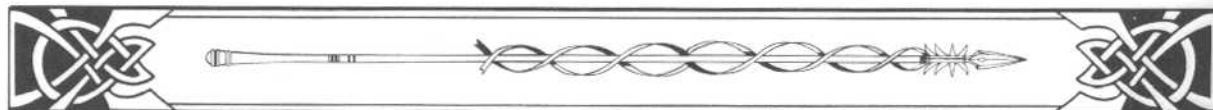
Woodhen bones.

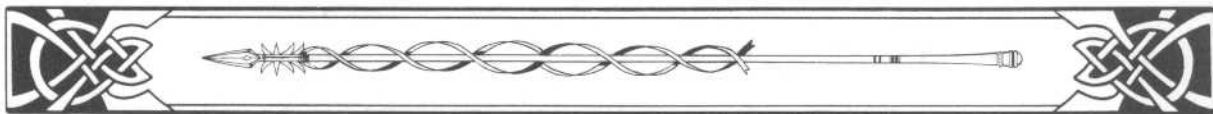
Black-crowned woodhen bo—

Something like a flash of light went off inside my head, a flash brighter than the one the *Valiant Aftershock VI* is said to have made when its garbage disposal was turned on while the captain's shower was in use just as someone flushed the latrine, thus draining all of the coolant out of the ship's radiant reactors, or so went the reasoning of the board of inquiry afterward though no one has been able to get close enough to the remains of the ship to confirm or revise the findings.

At any rate, what happened after that moment I cannot say with any surety. I found myself here in the Mount Nevermind Center For The Study Of Extraordinarily Deranged Individuals, wearing this very uncomfortable canvas garment with no sleeves and too many belts. I have spoken with Skylark several times since then, when visiting times allow, and he has kindly brought me some speckled prunes and filled me in on events that transpired after the party with the gully dwarves. I confess that I find much of what he says to be on the incredible side, particularly the part where as a result of my actions Solamnia and Northern Ergoth declared war on Mount Nevermind, albeit for only three weeks. I do seem to have some memory of freeing an undead necromancer from a tomb in order to reanimate the woodhen, but I recall nothing that would have led to the *Valiant Aftershock XVII* coming to rest in one piece in the Central Plaza of Palanthas, having passed entirely through the palace of the Lord of Palanthas first.

On the positive side, I can claim to have final knowledge of the extraordinary fate of the black-crowned woodhen of Ergoth, and I conclude this paper (writing with my toes—a practice at which I have become very adept in recent weeks) with my grateful acknowledgments to the Grand University of Mount Nevermind for funding my expedition and granting me tenure as a result of my research, to the Mount Nevermind Center For The Study Of Incredibly Deranged Individuals for letting me keep Rosebud, who is getting along quite well for a reanimated if skeletal black-crowned woodhen, and to my best and apparently only friend in the entire world of Krynn, Skylark Jingleburr, for his warm support and attempts to have me released sometime within the next few decades after the government in Solamnia has forgotten about that little episode in Palanthas. Woodhens and experimental steamships come and go, but good friends are there forever.





A Guide to Holidays

Life can be hard on Krynn, but the burdens of the people are lightened by anticipation of annual celebrations. Many of the traditions and holidays currently observed sprang from beliefs in Krynn's pantheon of gods and evolved in the four millennia before the Cataclysm. That one catastrophe caused many to turn away from the true gods, particularly around Haven in Abanasinia, where the Seeker religion took root. However, there were always pockets of belief for many of the true gods, even in the darkest days after the Cataclysm. With the heroes' recovery of the Disks of Mishakal, true faith returned, bringing the old traditions into vogue again.

Nine holidays are shared by most nations on Ansalon. In addition, each nation has its own particular holidays—historic or religious events, the birthday of its founder—that are often a reflection of the nature of the people who observe them.

Dates are given for the Roman calendar for ease of reference.

Year Day, or Mark Year

Celebrated between the last day of the old year and the first day of the new, Mark Year is not an actual day of the week, but a day out of sync with time. On this day the people of many nations stop their toils and share gifts to celebrate the blessings of the past year and make promises for the new. The superstitious, metal-smithing dwarves melt down a spoonful of lead and with closed eyes drizzle it onto a plate. The cooled shape is then interpreted as a prediction of the dwarf's coming year: a hammer-shaped blob of cooled lead means hard work and prosperity; a wheel-shaped splotch a year of travel.

The Plainsmen use this day, known as Sekua Ho-tona, to cleanse away the spiritual and physical grime of the previous year. Male warriors strip down to loincloths, the women to undergarments, then race on foot from the village gate to the nearest river or lake (the colder, the better). There they scrub themselves with juniper branches and astringent herbs, then paint magical and animal symbols on each other with the red juice of the juniper berry. Afterward, they dance and engage in ritual hunts until dusk, when they listen to tales of great hunts and battles told by the tribe's loreman and other elders.

Dark Day: January 3

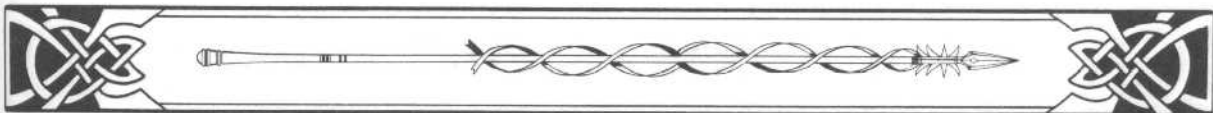
The anniversary of the Cataclysm is traditionally a day of reflection. Kender retell the story to remind their children why such an event must never happen again, though even the whimsical kender have difficulty embellishing the tale of that black day. The dwarves recall the lives and deeds of their ancestors in loud song; the elves have a similar tradition with thoughtful, somber poems. The peoples of many nations wear black. Others, such as the Plainsmen, observe an oath of silence.

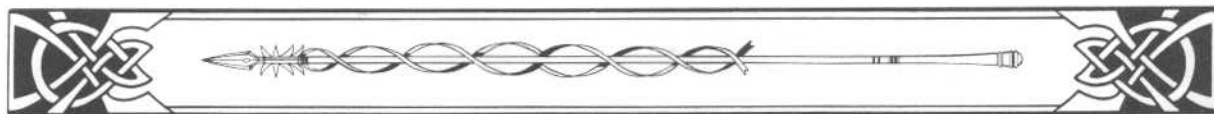
The city of Tarsis lightens this somber tone immediately on January 4 with the Tarsian Regatta. A large seaport before the Cataclysm, Tarsis commemorates its change to a land-locked city by building mock boats on wheels and racing them regatta-style on the dry harbor and seabed west of the city's current location.

Harnkeggerfest: February 9-13

Dwarves are a passionate but private people. Their celebrations, though infrequent, are loud and often involve vats of good dwarf ale. This holiday reflects their love of hard work followed by equally hard play.

The holiday is named after the ceremonial position of harnkegger, which is given to a hill dwarf who





works conspicuously hard between Yule and this holiday. The harnkegger dons the traditional heavy boots and red garter belt (actually, he always wears a red tunic over the traditional lingerie items, thank Reorx!), and gets the honor of tapping and sampling the first barrel of late summer ale. Thus begins a five-day festival of drinking ale, eating twisted hardbreads called frawlen (because they resemble a dwarf woman's braids, giving rise to the famous joke among overindulgers, "I've frawlen and I can't get up"), games, contests, and general merriment. On the fifth day, votes are taken and awards given for the best ale. The dwarves work without cease from Yule until Harnkeggerfest, so they take full advantage of this much-needed break.

Though Harnkeggerfest began strictly as a hill dwarf festival, many other nations have adopted the holiday, particularly in regions where Neidar have migrated.

Kith-Kanandras: March 14

Wherever they are on Krynn, all Qualinesti elves stop to observe the most sacred holiday in their calendar. Kith-Kanandras honors the life and accomplishments of the grandson of Silvanos. Kith-Kanan led the western elves to their new homeland of Qualinesti, marking their geographical and philosophical split with the Silvanesti. The celebration is festive for the Qualinesti, though reserved by almost any other culture's standards. Friends and allies from non-elven nations are invited to a feast symbolizing Kith-Kanan's tolerance for other races. Guests arrive as early as possible in the day, which is spent partaking of good conversation and rare elven spirits. The fare is the usual elven fruit and vegetables in delicate sauces, though the menu always includes Will-o'-wisp cake, the traditional fluffy egg-white confection, so named for its decadent contents (by elven standards, anyway).

The celebration ends abruptly at midnight, when non-elven guests are required to leave Qualinesti lands so that the closed-door celebration of Silvanosdras can begin at first light the next day. The elves make a game out of delaying their guests' departure as long as possible to show their sadness, then rushing them out at the last moment. It is no coincidence that March 14 was chosen by the Qualinesti, so that their "founder's day" would upstage the Silvanesti's older and much more somber celebration.

Silvanosdras: March 15

Historians mark this date in the year 4351 PC as the birth date of the heroic elf who united, then led the first elven tribes to their homeland of Silvanesti four millennia before the Cataclysm.

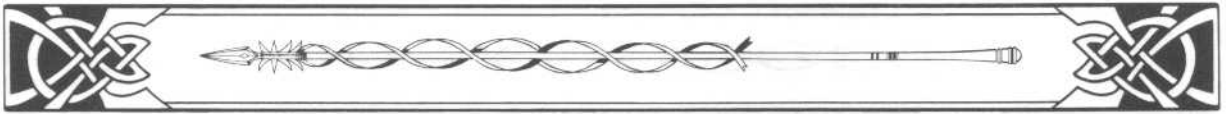
The Silvanesti carry statues or other likenesses of Silvanos to the sacred pool (or bring water from the pool to the statues) and bathe them ritually. Upon returning to their homes, they adorn their dwellings with simple white stars to symbolize the importance of the Tower of the Stars. The Qualinesti still observe some of the traditions; they skip the ritual bathing but decorate their homes with sparkling gold and bronze suns, in honor of the Tower of the Sun. At sundown, people in both nations recall the tale of Silvanos who, in the first year of the Age of Light, brought the elves together on Sol-Fallon to swear oaths of dedication to the principles of democracy. The Silvanesti alone renew these vows symbolically on the tallest nearby hill.

The Silvanesti observe a fast throughout the day of Silvanosdras. The Qualinesti have done away with this traditional fasting and instead exchange small, expertly crafted presents.

Spring Dawning: March 21

Signaling the reawakening of the earth, the vernal equinox is celebrated by all nations in a variety of ways. The village of Solace hosts a large festival where wares and crafts are sold. In places where kender





congregate, such as Hylo and Goodlund, the celebrants bang cymbals and pot lids or wear colorful clothing to symbolize the earth's vibrant mantle.

The Qualinesti call this holiday Fontanalia, a day to honor the spirits that dwell in flora and fauna. Garlands, fashioned from spring flowers by young elven girls, are often worn. Elven bards compose and perform new odes to the perfectibility of trees and other objects of nature.

Because the Knights of Solamnina were founded by Solamnus, once the highest military leader in the nation of Ergoth, the humans of Solamnina and the island nation of Northern Ergoth share a custom of staging a mock battle between two young knights, one dressed in white wool, representing winter, and the other in green linen, representing summer. The winner of the contest is believed to indicate whether summer will come early or winter will linger on.

Harrowing: April 4

Though waning in popularity, many folk still celebrate this oldest of holidays, which marks the start of planting time. Long ago, the actual date of this spring celebration changed from year to year, since the growing season varies from region to region, but the Kingpriest of Istar standardized the date, as he did for many holidays in the years prior to the Cataclysm.

Traditions vary widely, from the ceremonial planting of the year's first seed in Southern Solamnina, to the more earthy fertility rites observed by the Plainsmen of Abanasinia, which includes dancing around a pole decorated with colorful vines. The humans in Khur observe no ceremony, but believe that this is the day the spirits wrongly imprisoned in the Abyss are released upon the land in the form of the spring rain and windstorms. The dwarves see this as an occasion to feast with the last of the winter stores in anticipation of the fresh bounty to come. In Goodlund, Harrowing is also a day for practical jokes. A popular kender trick on friends who like sleep too well is to exchange their bed tick of straw or feathers with one of dry burdock or thistles.

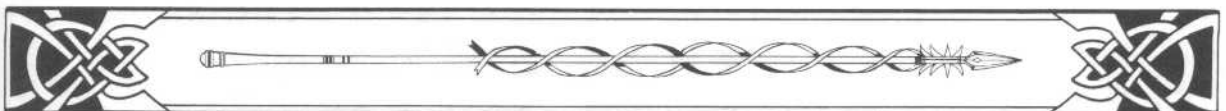
Midyear Day: June 21

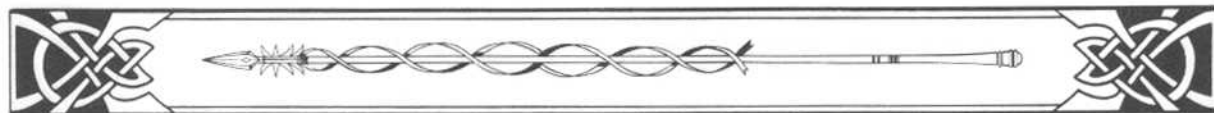
The longest day of the year, Midsummer's Eve is a celebration of light for all nations. Many human communities decorate with lanterns, candles, and glow beetles, and join in unrestrained dance. If the day is sunny, a picnic with traditional pickled eggs and bread dipped in wine is a must.

In the lost city of Thoradin, Midyear Day symbolized the reigniting of the forges. Nowadays, the dwarves, whether living above or below ground, celebrate by sampling vast quantities of spring ale. A reverberating drum beats from all dwarven communities, drawing folk, both civilized and barbaric (no ogres, please), to the nearest dwarven festival where market stalls and contests await.

Among the elves, the day has a reputation for being the one time when they are free with their passions. This is evidenced by the fact that a high number of elves are born in the month of March.

Many kender believe that during this long day lightning bugs (they call them sparklers) must absorb





all the light they need to glow for the rest of the summer. They spend the day before Midsummer's Eve capturing the small bugs in clear containers, then hold them up to the sun all the next day to fully charge them. After the sun sets, the glowing bugs are released, creating a fiery shower of sparks.

Festival of Candles: July 15

This very private family holiday is observed and, in fact, known only to the dwarves of Thorbardin. The clans living there do not speak of it even to each other. The solemn event exemplifies the dwarves' reverence for their dead ancestors, evidenced by the perpetually empty eighth throne on the Council of Thanes, the Kingdom of the Dead.

Mountain dwarves observe this occasion on the lake in the Valley of the Thanes, Thorbardin's burial grounds. Each family launches a small, distinctively built boat lit by a single candle and filled with food offerings and memorial scrolls inscribed with the names of dead ancestors. The lake sparkles with the light of a thousand lanterns. The memorials are believed to have been accepted by the appropriate ancestors when the lantern light winks out. Some clans believe that by bathing in the lake on this day, the spirits of their ancestors will protect them from evil in the year to come.



Heroes Meet at Inn of the Last Home: September 13

Tales of this event from 351 AC have spread through poem and song, particularly those of the elven bard Quivalen Soth. Today, in addition to local celebrations, people travel from all over Ansalon to arrive in Solace on this day. There they visit the Inn where nine heroes who saved the world first met. Soth's poems are performed before hearths all over Ansalon, and spiced potatoes are served and effusive toasts made to peace.

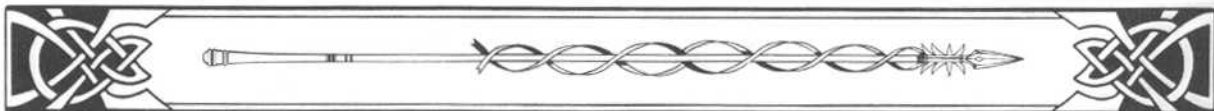
Although the general history is well known, each group puts its own special emphasis on the tale. For instance, in most dwarven versions, Flint Fireforge bears the greatest burdens and overcomes, with perpetual good humor, the mightiest obstacles. When kender tell the tale, Tasslehoff Burrfoot acts a hero second only to Kronin Thistleknot, and in fact, is said to have saved Flint Fireforge on numerous occasions.

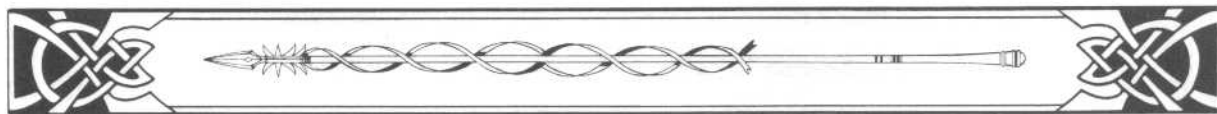
The highlight of the celebration in Solace, as well as other communities, is a dramatic reenactment of the event by a troupe of actors. The greatest of these is the one held at the actual Inn of the Last Home. In the years following the war, when the Inn of the Last Home was run by Caramon and Tika Majere, they presided over this annual event. If Caramon's participation was somewhat reluctant, the high-spirited Tika took great delight in reliving the event, though she was very finicky about who portrayed her.

For the historian, a note regarding the saga of the Heroes of the Lance: The meeting at the Inn was originally thought to have occurred November 13, but the confusion was later resolved when it was learned that Tanis wrote not in elven terms, but in human, when recording the date of the fabled get-together.

Summer's End, or Harvest Come: September 22

The autumnal equinox marks the beginning of the harvest season. It is a time of festivals and feasts in praise of the gods for the bounty of the land. Camaraderie is high, even between races, partially due to the sampling of summer wines and meads.





In human communities, children don clothing fashioned to resemble trees with multicolored falling leaves and drink the spiced pressings of summer fruits and berries. Neighbors help each other to bring in summer crops, shear wool, raise new barns and storage buildings, and render spring beef and pork for salting and smoking. Families decorate their homes with carved apples and mosaics of colorful barbarian maize. Contests are held to judge the biggest and best-looking produce.

Qualinesti celebrations include maidens performing graceful veiled dances, after which betrothals are announced, with the vows to take place in December when the busy harvest season has ended.

The Kagonesti of Southern Ergoth place green manure in a minotaur's horn and bury it until spring. Over the winter the manure absorbs the positive natural forces of the earth. On the spring solstice they dig up the horns and mix the energized manure with other fertilizers to increase the bounty of the land.

Not known for planning ahead, kender like to tell the story of the cricket and the ant: while the ant toils to store food for the winter, the cricket enjoys the last days of sunlight. When winter sets in, the ant is snug and well fed in his burrow, while the cricket is hungry and cold. Kender put an interesting twist on the moral to the story, however: Always make friends while you can, because you'll be needing people to visit and places to sleep during the long, dark winter days ahead.

Dwarves, on the other hand, see Summer's End more somberly, as a time to redouble winter preparations. They may be in grim or grumpy moods, since the spirits made in late summer will not be properly aged until February 9.

Festival of Knights: October 12

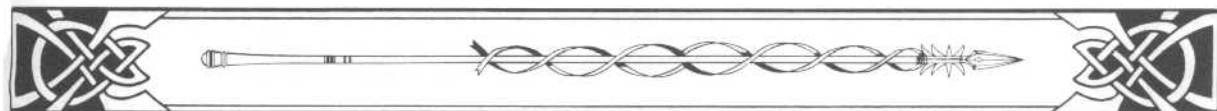
The Cityhome of Palanthas, populated predominantly by wizards and Knights of Solamnia, is host to a festival sponsored by the knights on this date. Colorful banners and pennants are strung from every storefront and hillside mansion. The festival begins at high sun with the ringing of bells, from the smallest children's chimes to the massive temple bells on the western slopes of Palanthas. A fanfare of trumpets announces the arrival in the Central Plaza of the Lord of Palanthas. At his word, a thousand pigeons bearing notes of invitation to Palanthas are released above the throng, forming a fluttering white cloud over the city.

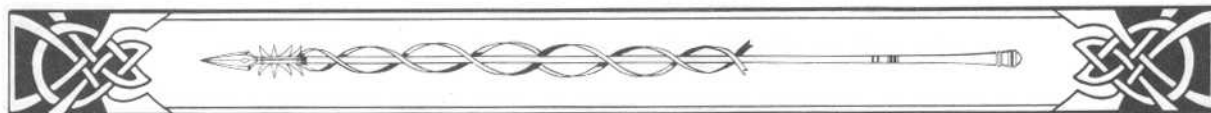
The avenues leading to the plaza are packed with vendors selling exotic herbs and wares from all over Krynn. Stag on Steel, a favorite Solamnic festival dish, scents the air. Every food vender has his own variation of this wine-marinated venison.

The highlight of this celebration in honor of the knights is a public contest called the Knights' Jest. Originally called the Knights' Joust, the event began as an actual demonstration of knightly skills. Over the years, however, the event evolved into a parody of a real tournament and became far more popular than an actual joust. Volunteers are fitted with metal bucket "helmets" and broom "lances," then joust atop austriches in hilarious imitation of the Knights of Solamnia.

Festival of the Eye: October 15

In ancient times, when all three moons filled the sky at one time and formed what looked like a huge silver eye with a red iris and black pupil, this festival was celebrated by mages. Apprentice wizards would go from door to door offering minor magics in exchange for food and small gifts. The tradition all but died when magic fell into disrepute in the centuries prior to the Cataclysm. The holiday was brought to the fore again in 139 AC, when the moons totally eclipsed one another, which happens only once every 115 years. At least once each year, however, all three moons are ascendant. Children take the opportunity to dress up as mages, wearing either white, red, or black robes, while pretending to perform tricks in





exchange for their choice of biscuits representing the moons of magic: Solinari, or White Moon cookies; Lunitari, or Red Moon cookies; and Nuitari, or Black Moon cookies.

Update and verify the details of your name Day: November 13

The only observance unique to the gnomes' calendar (aside from the irregularly occurring celebrations that accompany someone's completion of a Life Quest) is known as Genealogy Day. On this day, all gnomes line up at the Genealogy Guild to file the corrections, addenda, and clarifications to their names that have inevitably arisen during the previous year. All such changes are *ex post facto*; a change cannot be made in expectation of an accomplishment or event, but only in hindsight. The paperwork changes can take months to prepare and process. Because a gnome's name describes every noteworthy event of his and his ancestors' lives, however, gnomes take very seriously the task of updating their personal genealogical records. A lapse in this area will affect not only the gnome himself, but all of his descendants.

All other races assiduously avoid gnomes on this day, but then, they try to, always, anyway.

Thanks A Lot Day: December 6

On this date, kender give thanks for all the things that have dropped into their pockets in the past year. They celebrate by roasting the traditional goat-sucker bird (it's not much of a feast, since the birds are relatively small, but kender enjoy spending months hunting for the fearsome fowl). After the meal comes a sort of show-and-tell, where they view and hear about each other's favorite possessions. This, of course, leads to "handling," and the conversation inevitably drifts toward, "You must have dropped it," "This looks just like yours, doesn't it?" and other popular kender phrases.

All other races assiduously avoid kender on this day, but then, they try to, always, anyway.

Yule: December 22

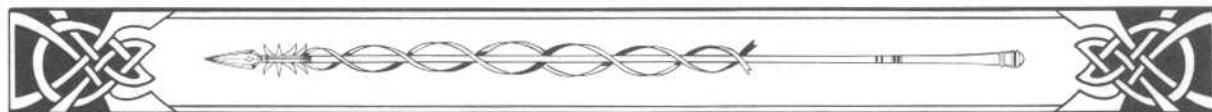
The winter solstice, the shortest day of the year, is observed as the last date for safe visits to family and friends before the heavy snows fall. It is a popular day for weddings and coming-of-age celebrations. In human communities, the homes, guild halls, and other public buildings have lighted candles placed in each window at dusk, and are trimmed with everbloom wreaths, symbolizing friendship, and bouquets of imported yellow roses. Hard candies, chocolates, and jelly-filled confections, made in the shape of the legendary dragons, are popular with children.

Regional traditions abound. Many dwarves decorate small, native trees with fruits and nuts dipped in precious metals. Plainsmen braid prairie grasses into garlands, asking the spirits of the land to visit in their homes during the Yule season. Elf families make special Yule chimes. Knights of Solamnia stage an elaborate hunt for the boar whose head will adorn the Yule table.

The peoples of many coastal communities, particularly along the Courrain Ocean, pen notes to friends or distant relatives and toss them into the sea in bottles for the fates to deliver. On Mount Nevermind, always a noisy place, the gnomes activate all their contraptions at once. The cacophony is tremendous, as reported by anyone who has witnessed the event and survived. A very old kender tradition involves bringing treasures one is no longer fond of and adding them to bonfire tinder, to symbolize ridding themselves of the deadwood in their lives. Of course, most of the treasures disappear before the fire can be lit, but usually there is enough for a tidy little campfire for roasting small meats.

Whatever each nation's culture, the most universal tradition involves lighting the yule log which is intended to last the whole winter. Afterward, food and supplies are exchanged and a final toast is given before families part for the long, bitter winter ahead.





Regional and Obscure Feastdays

Compiled from the Traveling Notes of Ogden Shatterstone, Adventurer of No Small Repute

It has been my fortune, since dear Father frittered away all his steel on investments that were, shall we say, less than sound, to have wandered the length and breadth of Ansalon, taking advantage of the hospitality of folk both common and singular.

Unlike my brother Eben—whose disappearance around Pax Tharkas was never explained to my satisfaction—I was lucky enough to escape the War of the Lance and the following troubles more or less intact.

Since my travels have overlapped with the things I hold most dear—wine, song, and good company—I have selflessly taken it upon myself to survey the regional and obscure feastdays that people celebrate across the lands of our fair world.

To put the reader at greater ease, I have endeavored to organize these holy days and festivals into the order in which they transpire throughout the year.

Firstmonth

Night of the Mantis (Eighteenthday). The Night of the Mantis is one of the new holy days that are spreading across the continent with the return of the old gods, despite the best efforts of the ever-stubborn Seekers. This holiday is not widely observed among the common folk, and no wonder.

The Night's general lack of popularity is due to the as yet small following of the god to whom it is sacred: Majere. The details are a bit obscure to me, but it seems the monks of Majere set aside this night to fast, stay awake, and sit about drumming, chanting and meditating. Apparently it helps them attain a better knowledge of the world. All it gave me when I tried it was a headache.

Initiates into the Majerean faith are not fully inducted until the day after their first Mantis-Night. Outsiders are welcome, but the monks get rather cross if one tries to chant along with them.

Secondmonth

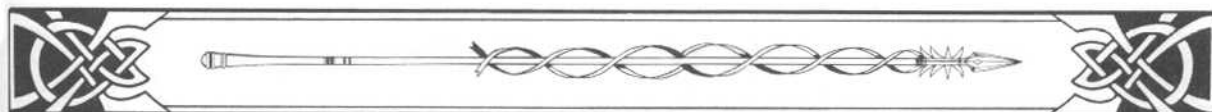
The Oathbreaking (Twenty-secondday). I once had the rare honor of speaking briefly with a good dragon, a young, brass-scaled fellow named Brazengale, whom I found to be the most delightful company. Among the many things he told me of his kind (which I must surely compile one day in a separate compendium) was the revelation of this solemn day, marked by all good dragons.

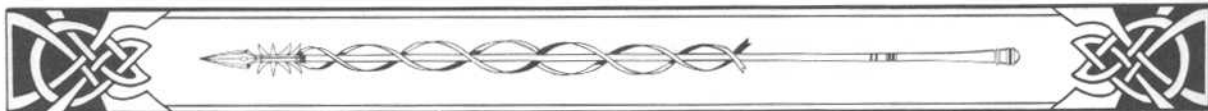
The Oathbreaking is a day of remembrance rather than celebration, for it marks the day when the good dragons came to realize, with the aid of the heroes Gilthanas and Silvara, that their eggs were being perverted into fell draconians by the deceitful followers of the Queen of Darkness.

The rites of the Oathbreaking are meant to be kept secret from mortal-kind, but Brazengale, being a particularly loose-tongued dragon, let slip that the main method of observance differs between males and females.

Female dragons—especially those who lost eggs to the Queen's agents—spend the day in mourning, weeping for their lost children. I've heard it said that dragon tears have some sort of magic to them. The Oathbreaking would certainly be a good day to test this bit of folklore.

While the females are mourning the children, the males take wing to hunt the draconians who arose from the corruption of the eggs. The dragon-men learn to hide away on this day, lest a vengeful wyrm





set upon them and destroy them in fury. As far as I know, no nondragons or evil dragons mark this day.

Honor's Dawn (Twenty-thirdday). Although new, this holiday has already spread across Solamnia and into surrounding territories. The Knights hold it in the grave reverence of which only they are capable.

Honor's Dawn marks the death of Sturm Brightblade, Hero of the Lance. The Knights credit his sacrifice with restoring the spirit of their order, and its observance has even been added to the Measure by the current Grand Master, Gunthar uth Wistan. At dawn, every Knight is required to don his full armor and raise his sword in salute to the rising sun while reciting prayers and the traditional knightly Oath.

Knights are also starting to make pilgrimages to the Tower of the High Clerist, where the High Clerist holds a service before Sturm's catafalque in the tomb where his body lies.

Thirdmonth

Siegeday (Thirdday). Just a few years ago, the city of Palanthas was razed in a final strike by the late Highlord Kitiara uth Matar. Admirably, the Palanthians have taken what had to be the darkest hour in that fair city's history and turned it into a holiday.

The day begins with a sermon at the new Temple of Paladine, conducted by Revered Daughter Crysania, the blind leader of that church. It is followed by a grim procession down the main avenues of Palanthas, led by a group of black horses bearing riders made out to look like skeletal warriors. This is supposed to represent the legions of Lord Soth, who caused the most grievous damage to the city.

As the day closes, prayers are said for the dead, and great bonfires are built in the city's courtyards. A tradition is developing whereby each family in Palanthas burns one item of personal value on these bonfires, to commemorate the great loss during the Battle.

Additionally, I have heard tell that wizards also hold this day in reverence. It is said that this is due to the apparent demise of the terrible archmage Raistlin Majere during the Battle. The Inn of the Last Home in Solace—owned in part by Raistlin's twin, Caramon—always remains closed on this day. Other than these cases, however, Siegeday is not observed outside Palanthas and its immediate environs.

Fourthmonth

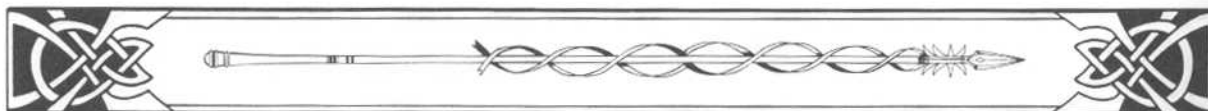
Forgeday (Nineteenthday). Few take their merriment as seriously as do the dwarves, and the dwarves are most serious about their revelry on this day.

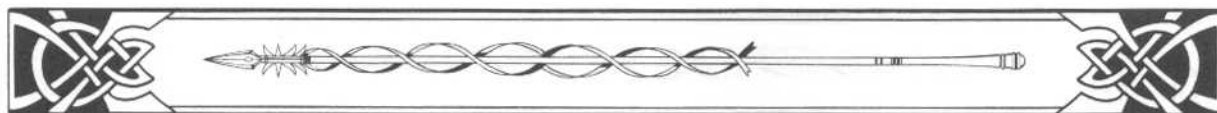
I make a point of seeking dwarven lands in time for Forgeday, as I have something of a soft spot for dwarf spirits and food. The dwarves of Garnet welcome visitors on Forgeday, but it takes a bit of work to gain admittance into the great Kingdom of Thorbardin when the ceremony draws near. Still, I have been lucky enough to spend one Forgeday as a guest of Pick Kytill, the new High Thane of Thorbardin.

Dwarven celebration has a certain grimness about it that some might find oppressive. The bearded folk prefer droning chants to songs, and only dance after the gremlins who live in the dwarf spirits have gotten a strong hold of them. Dwarves are surprisingly good dancers, but have little use for dancing when sober.

The dwarves are experts at preparing feasts, and although the fare is generally quite heavy—dark bread, mutton, and mushrooms are staples—it is also delicious. Likewise with dwarf spirits and their thick, black beers. Food and drink are so plentiful at dwarven feasts that I am not usually hungry again for nigh a week afterward.

Forgeday, as the name might suggest, is sacred to blacksmiths, who are treated with greater respect





than the Thaners themselves. Each dwarven smith is required to forge a particularly exquisite item in honor of this day. Some of the greatest dwarven weapons—most notably the Hammer of Kharas—were crafted on Forgeday.

With the return of the dwarven clerics in recent years, Forgeday has regained its old significance as the holy day of Reorx. Dwarven bards often chant their version of the creation of the world—one that, I might add, is quite at odds with any other version I have heard.

I've heard that the gnomes also observe this day, but I absolutely refuse to return to Mount Nevermind after the rather unpleasant Mark Year I spent with those insane little creatures. All I know of the gnomish version of Forgeday is that the different Guilds use it to fire up their cleverest new inventions. The resulting explosions can often be heard clear across Sancrist Isle.

Fifthmonth

Bookclosing (Fourthday). This really isn't a holiday as such, and I would not even be aware of its existence if my friend Bertrem, chiefmost of the Aesthetics at the Library of Palanthas, had not mentioned it during one of our lengthy conversations.

To the best of my knowledge, Bookclosing is observed by one man only: Astinus of Palanthas. On this day, each year since the Battle of Palanthas, the great historian ceases writing. Strangely, little of consequence ever seems to happen on this day, as if history itself stops when Astinus sets down his quill.

Bertrem was unsure *why* this day is so special to Astinus, and, frankly, is too timid to ask. I would put the question to the Deathless One myself, but he has so far refused to see me. Gossip has it that Bookclosing has something to do with a tome of Astinus's own *Chronicles* that was brought to the sage by Caramon Majere after the Battle. Astinus usually spends the day poring over this tome, but none know what the book holds.

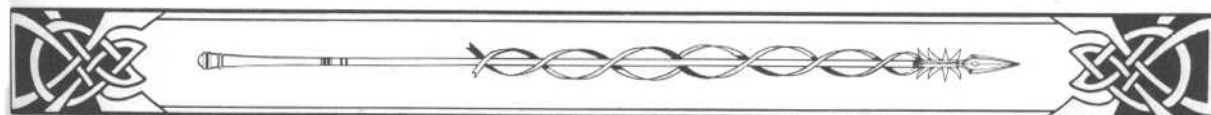
Feast of the Sea (Thirteenthday). This is an old festival, which was first observed by the folk of the ancient Empire of Ergoth. It survived that empire's decline and fall, and is still marked by the dusky-skinned mariners of Northern Ergoth. From Ergoth, it has spread to all ports on Ansalon, including Palanthas, Kalamian, Caergoth, and Flotsam. It is also revered by the pirates and minotaurs of the Blood Sea.

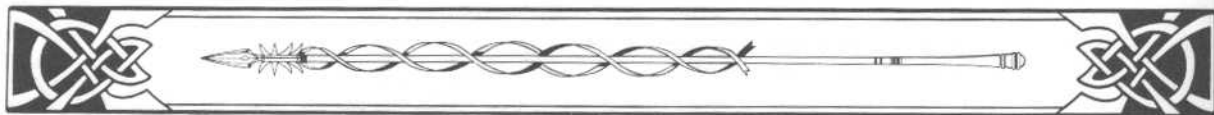
The day has always been sacred to the god Habbakuk, although the Fisher King was treated as a whimsical or vengeful figure during the dark times between the Cataclysm and the gods' return. Every ship captain and sea mage holds the day in high regard for dedicating new ships and tossing small, private sacrifices into the waves.

The highlight of the day is, without doubt, the Great Regatta. Every ship in a port, from the smallest dinghy to the greatest galleon, is expected to participate in a race (the nature of this contest varies from port to port), and the winner is dubbed the Sea Lord and treated as a guest of honor at the evening's festivities. Other contests, like knot-tying, knife-throwing, and rope-climbing, are also quite frequent.

After dusk, there is a great feast of fish and other sea delicacies. Rum flows freely, and brawls are common. Sea chanteys ring out from the wharves, and every sailor tries to outdo the rest with outrageous tales of mermaids and sea serpents. Commonly, the day following the Feast of the Sea is set aside by sailors as a day of rest and recuperation.

Vinasfest (Twenty-seventhday). This day is accepted in Solamnia variously as Vinas Solamnus's Day





of Life-Gift, the anniversary of his rebellion against the Emperor of Ergoth, and the anniversary of the foundation of the Knighthood. It's unlikely that all three events actually occurred on this day, but I'm not going to quibble about history with an armored man holding a sword. Besides, I would never begrudge the Knights the one day of the year when they truly seem to enjoy themselves—honorably, of course.

By "enjoy themselves," I mean knock each other from their horses with their lances and batter each other silly with maces. While I would never think of this as a holiday activity, the Knights seem to think the Vinasfest tournament is jolly fun.

Tournaments are held all across Solamnia on Vinasfest, the largest being at Palanthas, Solanthus, Vingaard, Caergoth and Sancrist. Jousting, melee, and archery are chief among the tourneys held by the Knights, and the combatants are eventually whittled down to three champions—one each from the Orders of the Crown, Sword, and Rose. These three champions do battle until a High Champion is determined, and the High Champion becomes guest of honor at the great feast in the host Knight's manor that evening. Becoming the High Champion of a Vinasfest tournament is one of the highest honors a Knight of Solamnia can win in times of peace.

More importantly, the tournaments are a chance for unmarried Knights to woo ladies and carry their tokens. Many Solamnic marriages can be traced back to a Knight acting as a his lady-wife's champion in a Vinasfest tourney.

The feasts in the evening are generally staid and formal affairs, but the venison is without peer and Solamnic brewers and vintners save their finest ales and wines for Vinasfest. Each Knight at the feast is expected to tell a tale of some honorable deed he has performed in the past year (the older, retired Knights are allowed to speak of their sons' deeds or feats they themselves performed in their youth). The night ends with courtly dancing. I've never been able to quite get the hang of these formal dances, but the Knights treat them quite seriously.

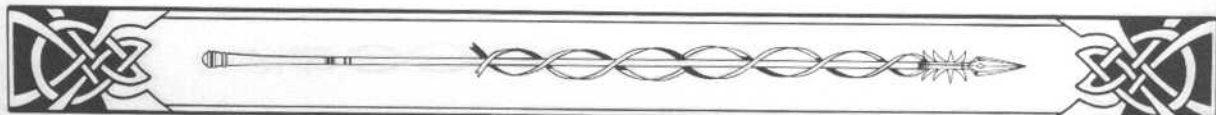
Everything in sight is draped with garlands of pink and red roses during this feast, and the Knights consider it a good omen if a kingfisher alights on the tower of the local keep. Lately, the Knights have taken to devoting this holiday and its tourney to the god Kiri-Jolith.

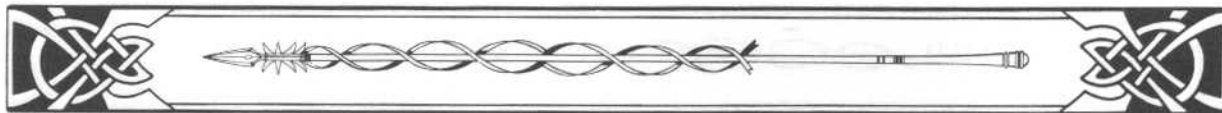
Sixthmonth

Kith-Kananaith (Firstday). Of all of Krynn's nonhumans, the Qualinesti elves are undoubtedly my favorites. The Qualinesti are neither as brutish as their cousins the Kagonesti, nor as standoffish as the Silvanesti. Because of certain favors I rendered for the elves on their return from exile after the War of the Lance, I am one of the few humans permitted within their glorious land. The festival of Kith-Kananaith (literally "The Life of Kith-Kanan") celebrates the founding of their beautiful nation. (Not to be confused with Kith-Kanandras, which is held on the anniversary of Kith-Kunan's death.)

In true elven fashion, there are hardly any standard rites performed on Kith-Kananaith. The day begins with a benediction by the Speaker of the Suns (currently that rather humorless chap, Porthios) and a brief song of praise to Kith-Kanan. After that, the elves let loose and throw a great, aimless party that lasts well into the night.

Elves are capable of having a good time at the slightest provocation; with an actual reason, their merriment can wear out the halest human. Song, dance, and games are the orders of the day. These are generally free-form, and can last the whole day through. Elves toss fresh flowers in the streets, prance in circles around trees, and open their homes to their neighbors. Mages cast glorious, colorful spells, captivating children and adults alike. Griffon-riders wheel in the sky. Elven mead and wine is shared by the whole community.





At dusk, the entire village (or city, in the case of Qualinost) gathers for a great banquet of fruit, vegetables and delicate sweets. After that, the singing and dancing resumes, generally to the music of harps, flutes and drums, in the light of the moons and stars. Love-play is frequent, or so I'm told—this is one part of Kith-Kananaith from which non-elves are strictly banned. The elves sleep outside on beds of moss in memory of their ancestors, and wake the next dawn covered in the morning dew.

Day of Storms (Thirdday). In the northern climes, especially around Nordmaar and the Blood Sea of Istar, the beginning of Sixthmonth is marked by violent thunderstorms and even the occasional cyclone. While most folk simply weather these storms as best they can, sailors observe this day as the heart of the stormy season. It is a day of quiet, reverent dread rather than merriment, and the mariners mark it by pouring libations of red wine into the harbor, in the hopes that the storms will be satisfied to take the drink rather than the sailors' blood.

I have heard tell from men with haunted eyes that the Day of Storms is revered by the priesthood of Zeboim. Wild tales abound of their tempest-dances on promontories overlooking the sea and the grim sacrifices they throw into the crashing surf below. While these stories are probably exaggerated, they are enough to cast fear into the heart of the most grizzled sailor.

Seventhmonth

Graystone Eve (Eighthday). This is a day of great superstition and fear among many dwarf clans, as it marks the day the Graystone of Gargath was loosed upon the world. Every little town has its own rituals it performs in an attempt to ward off the Graystone's magical effects.

At one time, I traveled in the company of a wizard of the Red Robes, and noticed the fellow seemed a bit edgy as Graystone Eve drew near. I asked him about this, and he explained that it was because some villages have an unfortunate tendency to form mobs whose purpose is to hunt down magic-users and burn them at the stake. While I've never seen such practices, many communities burn robed scarecrows on Graystone Eve. Itinerant wizards would do well to avoid such places on this day.

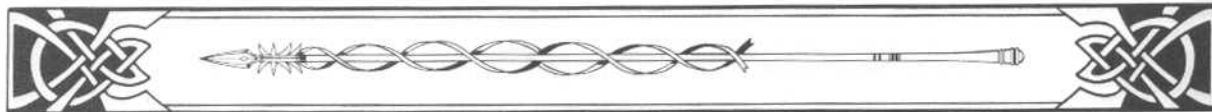
Graystone Eve is also immensely popular among the kender, many of whom view the Graystone as the most interesting thing that could possibly exist. As a result, kender often hold "stone hunts" on this night, roaming around and looking for fascinating things, in the hope that one might turn out to be the Graystone in disguise. Needless to say, the thought of packs of kender wandering about, wantonly grabbing anything that catches their fancy, only makes folk nervous. Many cities call the preceding day Kenderleave, and make a point of escorting the little creatures outside the walls. This just encourages the kender to try to get back into the cities again, though, their reasoning being that the folk of such a place must be hiding something very interesting indeed.

Because of their god's involvement in the creation of the Graystone, the followers of Hiddukel—priests, thieves and corrupt merchants (or at least the more corrupt merchants)—are coming to regard this as a holy day. I have little stomach to investigate what dark rites they might perform on this night.

Day of Dragons (Twentiethday). Just as the Oathbreaking is holy among the good dragons, this fell day is revered by the dragons of evil and their followers. Unlike the Oathbreaking, however, this day is not a secret to mortals. In the lands conquered by the Dragonarmies during the War of the Lance and the years following, the folk came to know this dark day all too well.

Celebrating the return of the first evil dragons to Krynn, this day was greeted with understandable dread by those who knew the scourge of the Highlords. Even now, evil dragons take to wing and engage





in ceremonial hunts on this day, their aim to burn and destroy rather than devour. To make matters worse, the priests of Sargonnas engage in sacrificial rites in honor of their foul god. These culminate in acts of ritual arson that only further the destruction wrought by the dragons.

Even a dark day like this, however, is not without bright spots. In some lands, especially those freed from the Dragonarmies' dominion in the dying days of the War, the folk have turned this festival against the dragons. The mood is still generally grim, but there is a spirit of defiance hanging over this day that may even keep the dragons from attacking certain towns.

Aside from the usual feasting and carousing, the major rites in such cases are the telling of tales of dragons' deaths, and the burning of a wicker effigy of a wyrm in the town square.

Ninthmonth

Qualintsalaroth (Twenty-fifthday). Among the elves of Qualinesti, this day is viewed with an unparalleled sadness. And short of a single morose kender, a nation of mourning elves has to be the most depressing sight my eyes have seen.

I chanced to be in Qualinost on this day some years ago, shortly after the end of the War of the Lance, and I have made it a point of utmost importance not to do so again, so long as I live. From a young elflord whom I knew during the War, I learned that Qualintsalaroth means "Death of Qualinesti." It marks the day when, facing overwhelming odds against the Dragonarmies, the elves abandoned their homeland.

On this day, every Qualinesti, from the great Porthios to the youngest orphan of the lowest house, dresses in robes of violet, the elven color of mourning. The women wear veils and the men masks, so that the only features showing are their eyes. These are usually wet with tears of utter anguish, for the flight from Qualinesti is still a fresh memory for these people.

What's more, it is forbidden for the elves to speak to anyone from dawn to dusk. I had the distinct impression that the elves had fled their home once more, to be replaced by thousands of silent ghosts.

The elves gather in the great Hall of the Sky beneath the stars, each holding a single candle. And, when the last glimmer of sunlight has faded, they start to sing. I do not know what the words of this haunting hymn are, but I wept nonetheless.

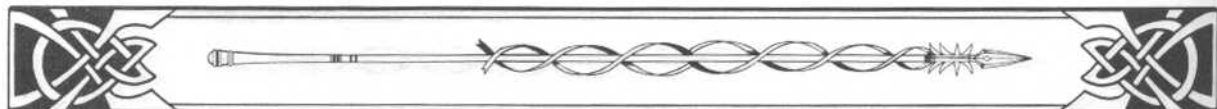
The strangest thing about the hymn, though, is although its harmonies are as pure and clear as any music voiced by the woodfolk, the voice which would lead them is missing, making the song sound hollow and even more mournful. I asked my elflord friend why this was, and he replied that the missing voice is that of Gilthanas, brother of the Speaker. When I asked him what became of Gilthanas, he refused to answer.

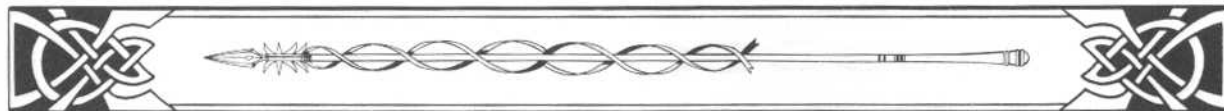
At the end of the hymn, the elves douse their candles one by one and walk out of Qualinost in a silent processional. Once they were in the forest, they moved too quickly for me to keep pace, and I soon lost them. Where they go on this night, I cannot say, but they had returned and were going about their business once more when I awoke in the morning.

Eleventhmonth

Rifarsdag (Sixteenthday). Just last year, I set out from Tarsis for Icemountain Bay, there to find passage across the sea to the warmer climes of Palanthas. To my regret, I did not discover until too late that the map I bought had been drawn by a kender. When I next return to Tarsis, I shall find the cartographer who sold it to me and strangle him.

Within a few days, I was thoroughly lost and in danger of freezing to death. The more I wandered, the





deeper the snows grew and the colder the wind blew. Soon I realized where I was—the foot of Icewall Glacier. I felt certain my travels would end there, and I only wondered whether frostbite or the thanoi would kill me first.

Imagine my relief when the Ice Folk found me. The barbarians took a liking to me and brought me back to their village in their great iceboats. I spent several days there, waiting for the next iceboat to leave for the coast, and while I was among them I discovered that, as has happened so often in my travels, the Companions of the Lance had preceded me.

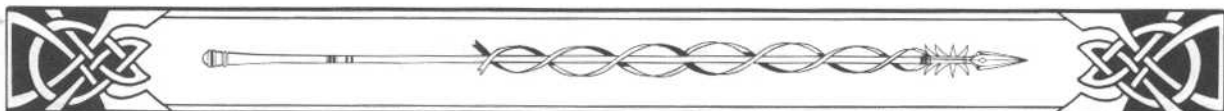
The tribe gathered in the hut of Chief Harald one night for a great feast of fish stew and roast goat meat, accompanied by rich meads and ales I assume they got from the Tarsians. The folk soon fell to telling stories about battles against the thanoi and the white dragons of the Dragonarmies. After a while, a wizened old man—the village shaman, I discovered—came to the fore.

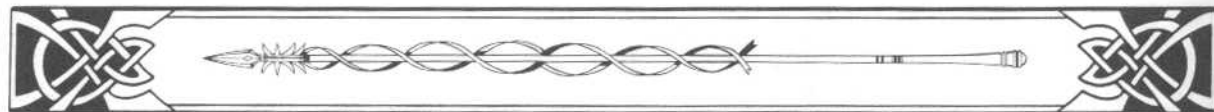
His name was Raggart, and he told the tale of the Frostreaver, a war axe made of ice that—or so his song said—the Golden General, Laurana, used to defeat the Highlord Feal-thas. This was obviously the focal point of the evening, which I learned was called Rifarsdag—Ice Folk for “Reaver’s Day”—and which was the anniversary of the death of Feal-thas.

I know little of what other holidays the Ice Folk celebrate. I would not recommend traveling to Icewall Glacier in any event. It took weeks to get the feeling back in my toes after I left that frozen wasteland.

Twelfthmonth

Kharas’s Shame (Tenthday). A dwarf’s beard is his honor; he wears it as a Knight of Solamnia wears his armor. Without it, the dwarf is an object of ridicule and disdain. Thus it may come as a surprise to





humanfolk that one of the dwarves' greatest heroes, the noble Kharas, voluntarily shaved off his own whiskers.

No one can be dour quite as well as dwarves, and they are never grimmer than on this day. In remembrance of Kharas and his protest against the Dwarfgate War, the dwarves tuck their beards into their shirts, hiding their pride. This practice even includes those dwarves who travel outside Thorbardin, often drawing puzzled looks from humans.

Before the War of the Lance, this holiday was known only to the mountain dwarves of Thorbardin. Since that kingdom has been reopened, however, the custom has spread to the hill dwarves, and to other dwarven lands like Garnet and, purportedly, Zhakar.

At the end of the working-day, the dwarves gather in the Life-Tree of the Hylar, where the Hammer of Kharas is kept. In a quiet, solemn ceremony, one of their race's champions comes to stand before the Council of Thanes and cuts off his beard. The assembled dwarves then turn their backs to him, and he takes the Hammer and leaves the Audience Hall, bearing the fabled weapon to a secret chamber where both he and the Hammer are sequestered by the clerics of Reorx. The warrior only re-emerges when his beard can again touch his chest—something that usually takes two or three months—and the Hammer remains hidden until the occasion for ceremony.

The dwarves consider this event an intensely private one, and they do not allow outsiders to witness it. They were reluctant to explain it to me when I visited Thorbardin on one of my scholarly sojourns. It is considered impolite to speak about it, and they said the only reason they told me anything was "to end your ceaseless nattering."

Brothersbane (Twenty-fifthday). It has been said of the dwarven race that their eyes are drier than the stones they mine. Whoever coined this expression apparently never walked among the bearded folk on this day. For though they do not bawl like kender or sob like elves, the dwarves weep on Brothersbane.

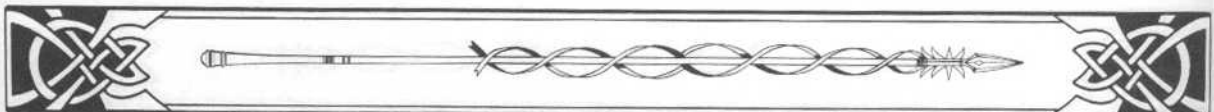
On this day, over two centuries ago, the Dwarfgate War came to its dire and catastrophic end. Ever since, many hill and mountain dwarves set aside their tools and spend their time in silent contemplation of the doom that befell their forebears as the mage Fistantilus destroyed the plains of Dergoth, wiping both armies from the face of Krynn.

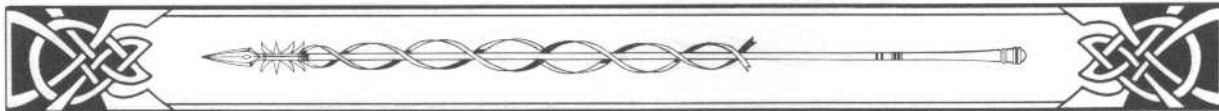
In the years since the opening of the gates of Thorbardin, the hill and mountain dwarves have added another rite to Brothersbane. The Thane of the mountain kingdom and his retinue go out through the Northgate onto the shattered remains of Dergoth in the first hour of dawn, at the time when the fortress of Zhaman exploded, and they meet the king of the hill dwarves and his entourage. The mountain dwarves bow to their cousins and ask them if they wish to enter Thorbardin. In response, the hill dwarven king respectfully declines.

It's all quite formal, really, but when I witnessed the ceremony (at the end of my tarrying in Thorbardin), I noticed that each dwarf's beard was wet with tears of remorse. I must admit I was moved by the sight of the two brother-races coming together at last in peace and understanding—if only for this day.

At this point I should address the rumors concerning the night that follows Brothersbane. Folk whisper that strange lights and noises emanate from the sundered hill called Skullcap this eve. I fear I must confirm these tales. On my way north with the hill dwarves, we camped within sight of Skullcap. I still wake in the middle of the night, bathed in sweat, and wish with all my heart that we had not.

For on Brothersbane Eve, a light that is composed simultaneously of all colors and none glows from the leering eyes and mouth of that skull-shaped hill. And I swear on my sword that I heard a voice, too—





a woman's voice, dark and sweet as the attar of orchids, whispering the same two words over and over, through the night: "Come home . . . come home . . ."

Other holidays also exist on Ansalon, generally in accordance with an anniversary of some sort. A holiday or feast is declared, for instance, on the anniversary of a king's coronation, or the investiture of a high cleric. It would be impractical for me to keep track of these, as they obviously vary from nation to nation, and will change with the passing of time.

More personal holidays include anniversaries of weddings, comings of age (which is still an important rite among the Plainsmen and other barbarian tribes), and, among the Knights of Solamnia, one's Dubbing Day (although in true knightly fashion, the Solamnics waste this day in fasting and vigils instead of celebrating properly). But one personal holiday is accorded a particular status, almost universal among all peoples of Ansalon. This is the Day of Life-Gift.

The Day of Life-Gift is the anniversary of one's birth. Although there are some unlucky souls who do not know the date of their birth (in which case one is generally chosen arbitrarily), most folk are fastidious about remembering their Life-Gifts, as well as those of friends and family.

Finally, I should make an observation about the kender. The little squeakers in Hylo or Goodlund have parties whenever they have the chance, picking up other cultures' holidays and often making their own on the spur of the moment. These impromptu holidays are called "Trapspringer Days," as the kender usually ascribe them to be the anniversary of the birth (or, equally often, hideous death) of their famous Uncle Trapspringer.

Kender parties can actually be a lot of fun, if one gets into the spirit of things. Speaking from woeful experience, however, I would advise anyone who means to celebrate with a group of kender to lock away anything of any value, and then bury the box they locked it in, if they ever want to see it again.

Sadly, Uncle Ogden's notes end here. A few months ago, he journeyed to Xak Tsaroth to attempt to ascertain what the gully dwarves do for holidays. Whatever possessed him to attempt this, I do not know.

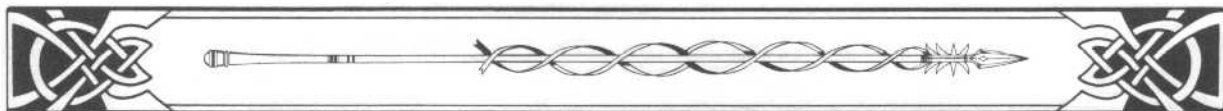
Soon after he arrived in the Sunken City and met with their gully dwarf king, one Phudge Highbulp, his notes became rather erratic. I have omitted these, as they are somewhat hard to follow. He was found several days after his last journal entry, wandering the Eastwall Mountains in a daze. Despite ministrations by Goldmoon of the Que-shu herself, Uncle Ogden has not had a day of clear thought since.

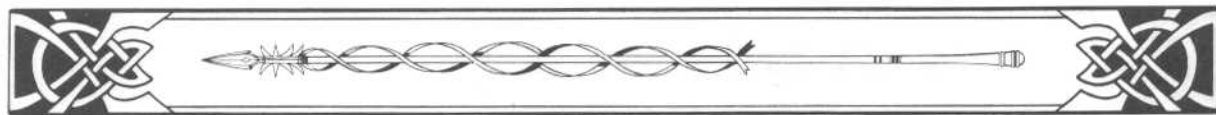
From his ramblings, I have come to believe he went mad trying to figure out the gully dwarf calendar. Their calendar seems to change whenever the little creatures forget it—which happens several times a day. The gully dwarves' legendary inability to count higher than two only makes things worse.

For now, Uncle Ogden is resting comfortably at home under the ministrations of myself and the rest of the family.

Uncle Ogden's list of holidays is not complete by any means. Other festivals surely exist in lands he did not visit, or at times of the year when he was not present in a given land.

*—Talen Shatterstone
of the Shatterstones of Gateway*





A Fragmentary Dissertation: The Brews of Krynn

The attached manuscript is edited with notes by myself, the Junior Amanuensis, Lancanor at the temple of Solanthus, called by my friends Lancanor the Simple. To establish the veracity of the manuscript research, attached to each section are appropriate notes, bills, letters of complaint, and outstanding calls for arrest. In addition, several tavern songs are appended, some few of them suitable for inclusion.

The manuscript is by Sweenor the Elder, who was a highly respected cleric, formerly Treasurer of the Temple. Following his departure with a heavily burdened pack team, he became known as Sweenor the Mobile. Throughout his travels, he sent copies of his research findings back to the temple; from the correspondence which invariably followed, his movements were traced.

Additional contemporary references to him are frequent in letters by the Temple bursars, who identify him in missives sent far and wide as rotund, red-faced, bearded, genial, bibulous, and generous. All letters conclude with the formal Temple invocation: DO NOT, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES, ACCEPT MONEY FROM THIS MAN.

After analyzing the fragments, I have presented them chronologically. They fall into three periods: the early, or Exorbitant period; the middle, or Conservative period; and the final, Wily and Self-Sufficient stage.

Know you that this manuscript will enlarge and enlighten. I have attempted to write the history of all the brews of Krynn. If I have fallen short, blame not the gods, but rather human frailty. Thanks particularly to the god Duggan, whom I may have met one particularly nasty night. . . .

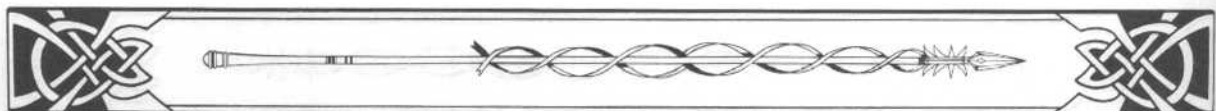
Vallen Ale is light brown and has only a slight head. Because vallen ale is aged in a vallenwood keg, (fourteen to twenty days, depending on the inn), its aroma blends in with the trees and walls of its native area. First offered in the Inn of the Last Home, vallen ale is not widely sold outside its original region.

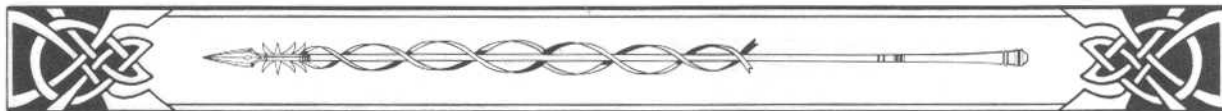
Vallen ale is best in autumn, when the first chill has hit the malt before it is harvested; a dry season produces the best ale. It is a perfect accompaniment to salted meats, stews made with beef and fresh vegetables, and fresh-killed game. In its home region, it is a serious competitor to Harvest Ale.

Because the Inn of the Last Home is in a tree, it is advisable to have sufficient funds to cover the ale and food purchase. Leaping from an inn window may be more hazardous than admitting a lack of funds.

For some reason, Sweenor penned this last note in a straggling, blocky print, apparently with his left hand. Appended to the manuscript is a second notice of an unpaid bill for healing.

Skull-splitter Ale, by reputation a heady and dangerous brew, comes down to us from the Cataclysm almost unchanged, if we may believe the brewers. Rich, foamy, and strong in taste and aftertaste, it is not a drink to be taken lightly. For reasons lost in antiquity, this ale is associated with inn sports and drinking games. These can vary from target games to riddle contests to feats of strength or skill. Universally, the object is either to force the loser to drain a glass at one swallow, or to buy drinks for the winner. The latter object is greatly to be preferred, unless one is playing to lose or gambling with





the winner. Skull-splitter ale is conducive to successful gambling, primarily if you convince your opponent to drink a lot of it.

A variant of Skull-splitter, similar in content and taste, is called Death by Sunrise. The reason for this last is not clear. . . .

The manuscript at this point rambles, then the handwriting becomes jumbled and incoherent. Subsequently it clarifies, at the same time degenerating into a self-pitying and maudlin prayer to the gods for an end to pain. From the positions of the constellations Morgion and Habbakuk as described, it was probably written at sunrise.



Draconian Ale is a traditional ale in Tarsis. Formerly popular with draconian warriors, this robust ale is dark, with a thick creamy head which dissipates after a few minutes. A traditional toast with it is for drinkers to hold the glass up and say to each other, "Wait." The toast originated because inn patrons who accidentally blew the head off on other patrons never got to taste their ale at all.

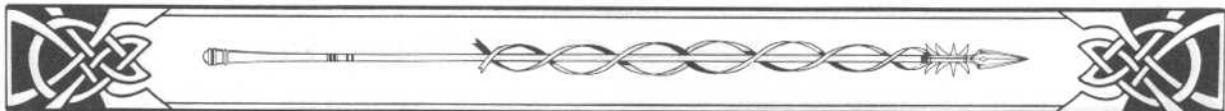
It is hard to wait, though, for this inviting brew to settle down. A stout ale whose origin is lost in the time before the Cataclysm, originally it was brewed to accompany seafood and shellfish. Unfortunately, after the Cataclysm, the city of Tarsis was no longer on the sea, and the brew fares less well with red meats. It is still popular with light soups or, more often, drunk for its own sake prior to a fight.

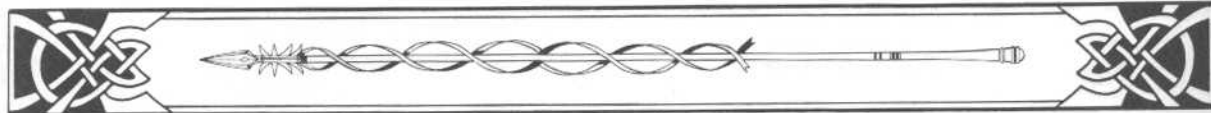
Patrons who do not wish to fight may, by buying liberally for other guests, induce them to fight each other.

This may refer to a fight, the origin of which is in dispute, that occurred in Tarsis during the lifetime of Sweenor. The only contemporary account of the fight exists scrawled in a straggling hand on the back of a clearly unreliable bar bill, enclosed with the manuscript. The original name of the Inn is crossed out; the alleged new name of the establishment is the "Sign of the Burning Barkeep."

Harvest Ale, though tasty and dark with a dash of bitters, is not what is termed a "strong" beer; brewers hold the fermentation period to a minimum. Because of this, to innkeepers' delight, it is often drunk in greater quantity than other brews, though it costs as much as others. Popular throughout Krynn as a thirst-quencher at harvest, this ale is the centerpiece of many small village festivals. Often two or three villages with variations on the traditional recipes will hold tasting competitions, arbitrated by experts. If possible, it is to one's advantage to judge such a contest.

Local records from a village near Solanthus show that late in his travels Sweenor returned and judged





such a contest. Subsequently, the village elders angrily demanded that the Temple refund Sweenor's fee, saying that Sweenor had misrepresented himself as a brewmaster. He was not, but still, by any reasonable standard, he was definitely an authority on ale tasting.

Kenderlager is an adventure. In northern Krynn, a standard retort to someone proposing a reckless action is, "Or, why not drink kenderlager?"

There are many reasons for the potential risk in drinking lager brewed by kender:

- The ingredients vary each time, if you don't watch the brewers closely. A kender will gladly roast and choose the finest hops, but is as likely to be intrigued by the flavoring potential of a passing frog, and defend its inclusion by pointing out that it also has "the finest hops."

- Confronted with the folly of adding vermin, reptiles, and the boots of passing strangers to a batch of lager, a kender will say earnestly, "I was only following the recipe for Uncle Trapspringer's Best." Ignore stories of Uncle Trapspringer's Best; no two batches of it are the same, and the only recipe, if there ever was one, seems to be, "Insert anything that doesn't run away. Stir. Age, unless you don't feel like it."

- To make superb kenderlager, one must participate in the brewing. First, propose alternative safe ingredients whenever the kender's imaginations become dangerous. Always present these ingredients as dangerous novelties. Help gather the ingredients. Where the ingredients are mundane, make them interesting by whatever expedients possible: gather them one-handed while suspended from a frayed rope over a mountainside, pluck them while leaping across the back of an angry owlbear, and so forth.

- Finally, to prevent the kender from becoming bored during the fermentation process, one must distract them periodically. Setting small fires works well. If necessary, setting fire to your clothing works equally well (I heartily recommend removing it from your person first), and there is some small satisfaction watching the kender imitate you. Continue to find distractions for fifteen to twenty-four days. I myself have found several suitable distractions. . . .

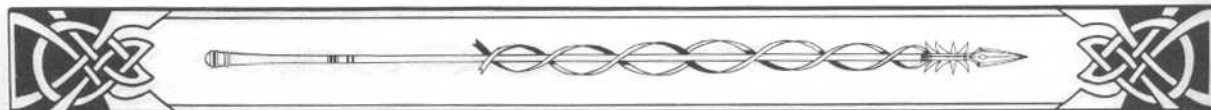
A proverb elsewhere says, "Ale is sweeter for danger." Perhaps any brew would taste good if you drank it after spending two to three weeks finding distractions for a kender.

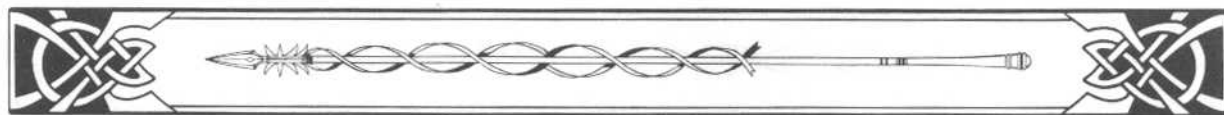
The rest of this manuscript is rendered unreadable by fire, water, and mysterious green and purple stains.

Fortified Ales and Lagers "Fortification" in brewing is similar in meaning to its military cousin: artificial defense of the weak. In brewing, fortification is practiced for three reasons: to enhance flavor, to enhance effect, and to enhance the adventure and romance of drinking something unexpected.

Brewers fortify beverages only after the brew is complete, since additives can interfere with the action of the yeast and the flavor of the drink. If one does not wish to alter flavor at all, it is best not to use additives until shortly before drinking—preferably while one's drinking partner is distracted. The subcategories of fortified ales and lagers are listed below.

Dwarvish Spirits are added by some brewers to ales in an effort to lend more body and stronger flavor to a mild ale. Used by unscrupulous innkeepers to ensure repeat business, this method has also been a means for poor brewers to enhance their product. Dwarvish spirits require a great deal of aging time. Moldbrew is one way to make the spirits more speedily, but they lose taste in exchange for potency. Other fermentation hasteners have been tried: sour milk, old cheese, even aging in rotted kegs. A combination





of mushrooms, spoiled milk, and rotten wood would likely produce a spirit that would be the most powerful brew possible—if anyone could be induced to drink it. When there is time, I will encourage a kender to do so.

For no understandable reason, appended to the manuscript at this point are several hasty sketches of a burning town and, with them, notes for an epic poem entitled "Legend of the Stolen City."

Gnomebrew is not, strictly speaking, a fortified liquor. However, since it falls under no other known category, it is best discussed here rather than not at all, and as a warning for the consumer. While other brewing operations simply involve kegs and vats, the brewing operations of Mount Nevermind are astonishing.

Gnomebrew is the only ale ever known to raise a corpse from the dead, if only briefly. It is the only ale known to result in murder charges against an innkeeper, and is the only brew known to actually catch fire spontaneously.

The gnome brewing process is complex, and was arrived at only after twenty-three years of research and seventeen years of severe industrial accidents. After seven fermentation cycles, five charcoal filtrations, forty-seven organic additives, ice-processing and fire-brewing, the resultant liquid was declared completely perfect by the brewmasters. Unfortunately, it was also completely undrinkable. Barrels of this ale still crop up in the cellars of inns from time to time, and one of the happiest sports of the locals is to convince a weary traveler to drink some.

A lawsuit suggests that, alas, Sweenor was not immune to this form of low humor.

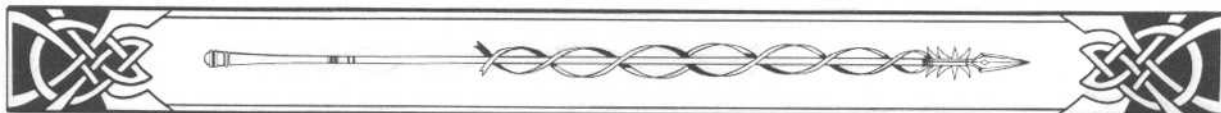
Physical Additives, frequently taste and color enhancers, are by far the most common used. A little burned sugar in a weak ale lends color and, if one adds too much, a burned flavor as well. Honey, while doing little for color, adds a great deal of flavor. Apple squeezings make for a wonderful fall addition, but take away from the color. Judicious mixes of burned sugar with honey or apple can lull even a seasoned palate into thinking it is drinking fine ale.

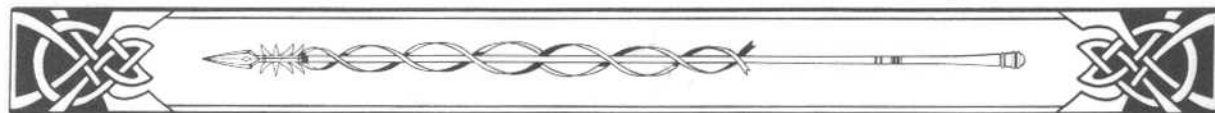
Poisons are by no means as common in ale as drinkers suppose. Occasionally, granted, the stray mistletoe or dwarfbane will find its way into a barrel or a cup. However, most often the effect ascribed, the following day, to a drinking companion's malice is a by-product of his or her generosity; the brew is not to blame in quality, only in quantity.

Written beside this passage, in a faint and shaky hand, is the comment: "Sometimes, in quantity, the brew is very much to blame."

Potions for sleep, health, courage, and so forth may, according to both tradition and scholarship, be added to simple brews to render them veritable ale-house elixirs. While mages may know a secret ordinary brewers do not, it should be noted that few mages brew ale. Potion-adulterated ale, therefore, is far rarer than the gossip about it would indicate. Herbal additions are probably common simply because brewers and innkeepers believe in them. Cowslip, for instance, when added to an ale provides a quiet, harmonious inn. On the other hand, ale fortified with moly promotes combativeness, particularly when one attempts to convince someone else to pay the bill.

In addition to useful herbs, powdered gems are thought by the superstitious to promote health, most notably after poisoning. When added to ales they promote strength of character. Powdered black opal in ale will strengthen resistance to dark fears, except of course in kender. Powdered ruby will fortify the





blood for combat. The gullible travelers who believe in such additives are a reliable source of income for those who do not.

The Temple has appended to the manuscript at this point a sufficient number of writs, letters of complaint, refund requests on warranty, etc., to establish that Sweenor was not among the believers.

Charmed Liquors are brews whose ingredients are pure and intact but whose natures have been altered with spells, charms, curses, or nonphysical tampering. The effects of these charmed brews are the same as those adulterated by potions, but without any aftertaste or effects. Charmed liquors are reputed to promote states of possession, mischief, combat, and so forth.

In all my travels, I could not find any evidence of these, and believe me, I tried. I must conclude that charmed liquors seem more a convenient excuse for misbehavior than a reality. Indeed, I used them in this way myself at the Inn of Fire's Shadow, in Takar.

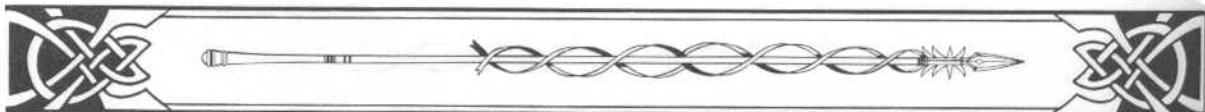
This was confirmed by correspondence with the keeper of the Inn of Fire's Shadow, who demanded restitution. The Temple Funders sent a curt note back disallowing two-thirds of the claims. Their response seems churlish if one has not seen and totaled the bills.

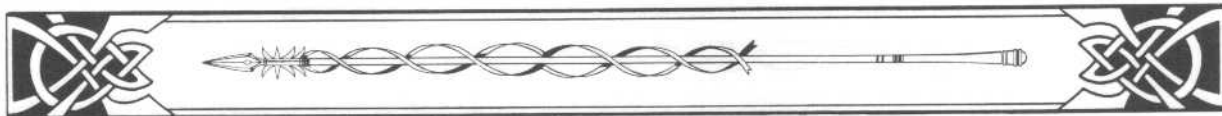


A final note: Editing this manuscript was my final work before leaving on pilgrimage. At first I was appalled by the Cleric Sweenor's lighthearted approach to appropriating other people's money. As I read, I realized how foolish and narrow-minded I had been. Sweenor the Mobile saw in front of him a new field of scholarship; he took the only method open to him if he wanted to research ales with full clerical rigor, firsthand. I am now convinced of the merits of his research, and I look forward to any additions I can make.

—Thankfully,
Lancanor the Amanuensis,
called the Simple

Post Scriptum: The fragment above is part of a larger manuscript found in the abandoned effects of Junior Amanuensis Lancanor, henceforth known as Lancanor the Easily Persuaded. Shortly after writing his closing notes, he left the temple with his few belongings, also with a stuffed and bulging leathern pack. The Temple urges anyone who reads this and knows anything of his whereabouts to notify us immediately. **DO NOT, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES, ACCEPT MONEY FROM THIS MAN.**





A Meadmaker's Journal

1st Entry, Early Autumn, Year of the Sun

Greetings, Lord Quilanarius:

In keeping with your wishes, m'lord, I am once more taking quill and ink in hand and recording for you and our honored guildmembers the details of my current travels. As you know, I am currently seeking several rare and potent ingredients for this coming winter's project, a vintage of my celebrated "Sparkling Methyglyn," and I am pleased to report that my search has met with some very promising results.

Of foremost importance has been my success in the gathering of a considerable quantity of nectar from a most astonishing flower that the mage Goranthil has discovered here in his secluded mountain vale. I have named this wondrous flower the "Dragon's Rose" for such is the intoxicating power of its perfume that I was instantly dazed as though I were in the presence of one of those most glorious beasts.

The blossom of the Dragon's Rose is also appealing, being the color of purest amberstone, and I shall retain a handful of the blossoms as well as the nectar for my recipe.

As for our friend and patron, the mage Goranthil, he maintains his preference for the solitude of his mountain retreat and insists that he has no plans to return home to Qualinost. The "occasional visitor" is welcome, says he, but I suspect there is something more to his motives.

For one thing, the path to his modest fieldstone cabin is too well trodden for only the "occasional visitor," such as myself, to have left such a clear and obvious trail. And, as the town of Solace is not so very far away, I suspect he is entertaining more than his fair share of travelers and is not so much the hermit as we think him to be. Ah, well, to each his own.

In closing this day's entry, I pause to mention that I have become a "parent." Of all the pranks and stunts that Goranthil has sprung upon me over the years, I must concede that he has finally outdone himself. Had I known the damn egg was going to hatch—and never mind that it was way too large to be a chicken's egg in the first place—I would never have sat down for my morning feast.

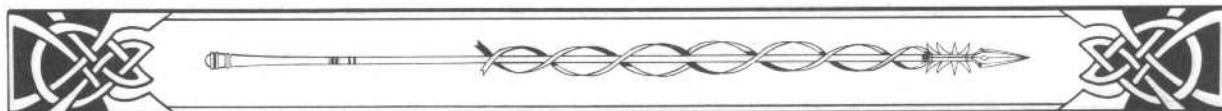
Ye gods!

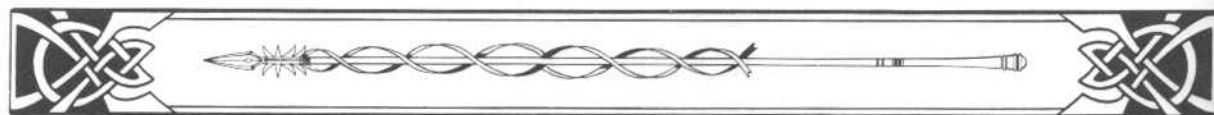
A hard-boiled egg is not supposed to roll around on the plate by itself, is it?

By all the stars, I did not know what to do next. And Goranthil, that buffoon, just kept laughing hysterically and dancing around the cabin like the blessed idiot he is, his breakfast "joke" being his finest hour. Suffice it to say, m'lord, that as my blue-speckled egg wobbled and rolled and spun itself round upon the table before me, the thought of handing over Goranthil to goblins as an after-dinner snack was a delicious temptation indeed. A brief moment later, though, I was betrayed by my own curiosity. The egg had stopped bouncing.

Some cracks appeared at the egg's fatter end and the air became thick with a rich, earthy scent, as though someone had been oiled and bathed in a faerie's perfume. The eggshell then shattered in an explosion of shards and I whispered a last desperate prayer. Thankfully, it was not a death's shade, or any other foul agent of the Dark Queen that came calling my name.

Therefore, m'lord, I am pleased to announce with a "father's due pride" that I have been blessed with a fine baby "daughter." To look into her eyes, though they be one green and one blue, is to see the world as it was at its own ancient birth—pure and untainted by Time. Her scales are supple, but no two are alike,





each one the reflection of a midsummer's rainbow, tinted with glimmering gold. Unusual, too, are her most extraordinary wings, for they resemble closely, in both form and color, the swallowtail butterflies that dwell in our fair Qualinost. It is a bizarre trick of fate that humbles me now and, perhaps, there is more to Goranthil's design than I see. For not the first time in my life, I am in awe of a dragon.

2nd Entry, Early Autumn, Year of the Sun

I was awakened this day by a great crash of thunder and the accompanying rain that pounded my tent. Half asleep, I listened to the thunder as it rumbled and rolled off through the hills, but then I heard my Methy whimper. She does not like the sound of thunder one bit. Reaching into my pack, I gently pulled her out of her cocoon of woolen sweaters, and she eagerly jumped into the reassuring warmth of my bedroll. Then she curled herself up and went back to sleep. I wonder what dragons dream of?

Yes, m'lord, I have named this infant. Her full name in Methyglynanaya, in honor of the exquisite spiced mead that so many of our kinfolk treasure most highly. It is a name she seems to like, too, for although she is only six days old, Methyglynanaya already responds when I speak the name to her. Aside from that, she seems perfectly content to eat once a day and sleep much the rest of the time as we continue this journey. I am happy to have her company during my trip, as it is still a long way to the Inn of the Last Home.

By the middle of the morning, the clouds had blown away and the brilliant autumn sun began to warm the lush mountain meadows. I searched about eagerly, hopeful of finding my quarry, and I am excited to report that I have found a colony of the giant honeybees at lair in these high, mountain vales! I was one step closer to success. It took me a moment of searching my pack but I retrieved the Dragon's Rose nectar.

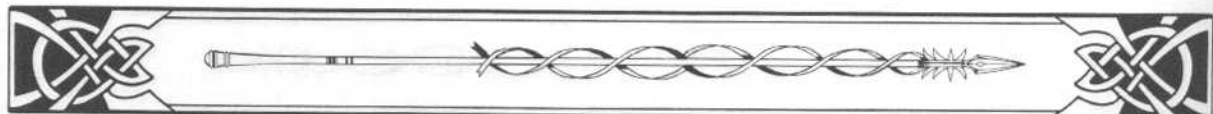
Uncorking the bottle, I poured most of the syrupy liquid into a large pan, two cups, and a pail before setting these on the ground at my feet. With the first part of my spell already prepared, I recorked the bottle and put the remainder of the nectar away for safekeeping. And there in my pack, completely oblivious to the excitement around her, I could see Methy fast asleep in one corner. I wondered if she would mind the skirl of my bagpipes as much as she minded the rumble of thunder. No matter, I decided, and pulled out my pipes from the depths of my pack and made ready to play.

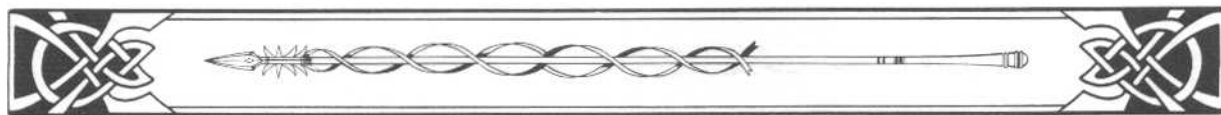
I knelt to one knee with my bagpipes in hand and adjusted the reeds at the base of each drone. The thin mountain air might have altered their pitch, but these were far more than just an old set of pipes. I had played these warpipes throughout the long war, putting the fear of the gods into many a goblin, and I knew of the music they played. In the ears of a foe, the music meant fear and the fearful had best run away. To the friends of the piper, the music gave courage and the courageous were ever victorious.

With a last look around, I raised the pipes to my shoulder and took the pipe chanter in hand. Two long breaths later, the air bag was full and I squeezed the pipes up under my arm. The three drones then sounded, one bass and two tenor, and I reached up with my spare hand and tuned them to balance. The summoning was about to begin.

In the essence of magic there are many sources of Power, but few are as potent as sound. The great mages use spells of symbols and glyphs, but few are complete without words. Each word is a sound and each sound is a key; thus are spells woven. A single sound, therefore, is power indeed, but what of a series of sounds? Or a collection of musical notes? This, m'lord, is the magic of a bard's enchanted pipes.

My fingers danced in a well-practiced manner and a flurry of notes went forth from my pipes. Each shrill note blended with the hum of the drones and the hills began to echo my tune. The old notes returned





“home” to the spot I was standing to meet “someone” new and thus the harmonies formed. In these delicate constructs of musical sounds, the enchantment that evolved in a swirling mist became an enormous queen bee. She hovered above me, regarding me, then flew off through the hills to the hive.

For ten minutes more I played the spell-tune and then the great bees appeared. At first I saw one, then two and ten more, as they soared near the cliffs and entered my spell. My queen led the swarm straight to the prize. Each bee in its turn drank of the Dragon’s Rose nectar, then yielded its share of honey. Placated and full, the bees returned to the air and left me there playing my pipes.

Thus, m’lord, have I summoned the great bees, with Dragon’s Rose nectar and a spell of magical notes. The drone of my bagpipes and the buzz of their hive resonated in perfect harmony, soothing away any fear of a thief in their hive. They had no fear of me. The nectar was accepted in lieu of their own, and I knew at that point that my spell had been perfectly made.

I had written this melody to rhyme with itself and so each note found its mate in the hills. Had I been piping and weaving my spell so much as a few yards away, the spell would have collapsed in a discordant heap and the bees might have attacked me instead. The notes had to blend in just the right place. That was my focus of magic.

3rd Entry, Early Autumn, Year of the Sun

These foothills are rugged and my progress is slow, but I shall enter the forest by this time tomorrow. This remote mountain path winds its way through many cuts in the rock and it is among these splits in the rock that I have set up my camp for the night. Looking out from the bluffs, I can see the towering valenwoods in the distance—they are at least two days’ travel away. The valley below remains shrouded in an early twilight mist, but the road south to Solace is there nonetheless. The road has been there a long time.

My journey this day has ended in silent prayer, as I have found the remains of one of our own near the trail. I was searching for firewood here in the bluffs when a glint of bright silver twinkled and led my search into a deep cleft in the rocks. Hidden within, I discovered the skeleton of an elven warrior huddled about the long-cold ashes of his campfire.

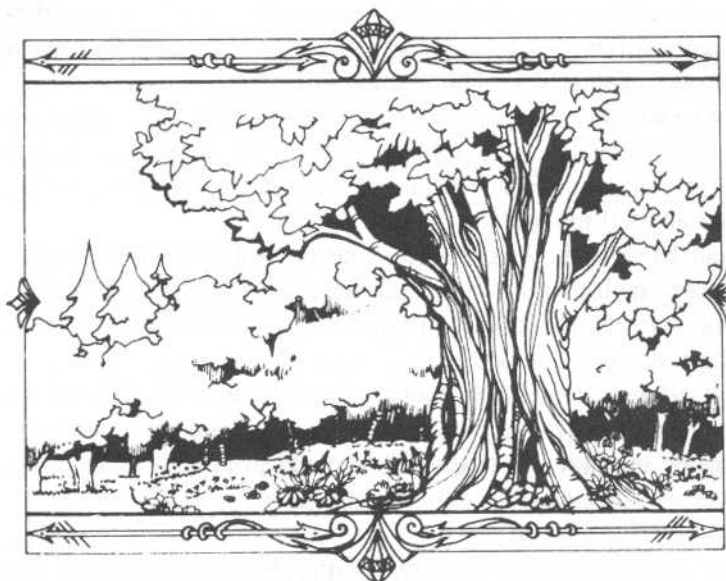
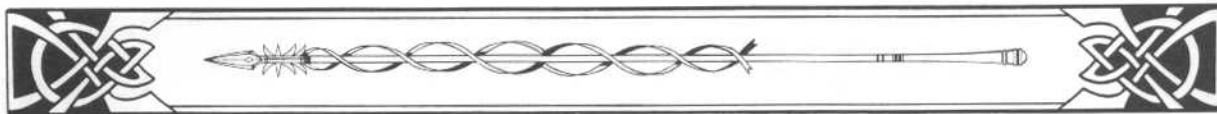
My thoughts were then flooded with memories from the War, of kinsfolk slain or lost to the wilds, and I wondered who he might have been. There were no cherished letters or a journal to be found and his possessions were few and straightforward. A bow and a sword, his armor and a knife, two snowshoes, a cloak and a helm. These were the tools of a warrior. A warrior who had found refuge from the cold and then died here alone in this cave.

It was well nigh midnight when I set the last stone and sealed the cleft up like a tomb. I then offered a prayer for the spirit of the deceased and made my way back to my camp.

4th Entry, Early Autumn, Year of the Sun

Earlier this day, as I drew near to the forest’s edge and was making for the road south to Solace, I fear I was nearly ambushed. The woodlands about me, as fine and healthy a stand of evergreens as I have ever seen, were suddenly silent with a breath-chilling and unnatural calm, a calm I have not felt since the War of the Lance. Fearing the worst, I quickly found protection behind a large, moss-covered boulder and drew forth my long sword from its scabbard. Ghilayn the Goblin-Slayer, bequeathed to me by my paternal grandsire, glowed softly with its magical warning and then flickered out.





As I crouched there behind the boulder, I had the familiar feeling that I was being watched, and so made ready to do battle. A few heartbeats later, the fey silence was shattered as the woods all about me echoed with the discordant clatter of metal falling and grating upon rock. I spun on my heels to meet any threat, my ancient sword slicing the air, but my foe was nowhere at hand. For a long, nervous moment I surveyed my surroundings, scrutinizing the shadows beneath the drooping pine boughs and the lush, tangled underbrush and saw nothing. A gust of warm wind then broke the stillness and whispered among the evergreens a message of danger passing. Somewhere in the branches of a

nearby pine tree, a squirrel and a jay resumed their boisterous squabble and thus the forest became peaceful again.

The strangest sight then greeted my eyes as two enormous swallowtail butterflies appeared in the glade. Perhaps I am still suffering the effects of Goranthil's bizarre humor, but as the butterflies weaved and bobbed and danced through the air, I could have sworn that I heard a child's gentle laughter. Have the swallowtails of Qualinost ever giggled at you, m'lord?

Gathering my backpack and bedroll once more, I slid Ghilayn into its scabbard and checked over my possessions before setting off toward Solace. I examined my pack and found nothing amiss, both nectar and shell shards quite safe. Not even Methyglynanaya had been disturbed. She was still sound asleep in her wool sweater-nest, hidden safely inside the top of my pack. All that I had lost was some time.

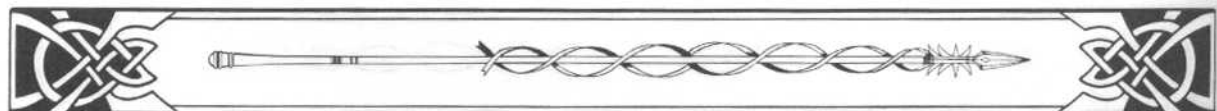
Good fortune and fate rarely agree, but this glade held one surprise more. Apart from stray butterflies and unseen assailants, I discovered some small patches of rare Irysh moss clinging to the trunk of an enormous evergreen. As this particular type of moss can be useful in mead, I stopped briefly to gather a small measure, then took up the trail once again.

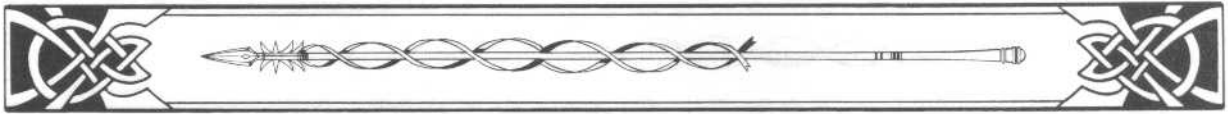
Long March

5th Entry, Early Autumn, Year of the Sun

This morning has broken with a raw northern wind and the gray, sullen clouds that promise cold rain. I am thankful that this will be my last night on the trail, and tomorrow I shall find a warm bed and hot food at the Inn. My clothing is damp with the day's early mist, but I have prepared for the rain. The Dragon's Rose nectar, the dragon shell shards, and the rest of my precious ingredients remain dry and fresh within the depths of my backpack. Looking up to the mountain peaks, I can see the snow has come early, and I worry of how Goranthil will fare in the winter to come.

I do not recall, m'lord, if I have ever related to you my experience of the cold and the snow, or of the battles Goranthil and I fought against the draconians during the deep of one winter. We were comrades-in-arms and eager for glory, fighting to protect our families and defending our fair kingdom from





the draconian onslaught. The winter, however, was an enemy to all and it treated elf, man, and reptile with equal and brutal prejudice. We had little comfort, save for each other's cheer, but at least the draconians suffered, too.

There are better ways to die than to freeze in the snow.

6th Entry, Early Autumn, Year of the Sun

Another long day of cold rain and chill winds, but the Inn is a half-day's travel from here. The road is all muddy with wagon ruts and brown puddles, so I walk to the side of the trail. I have seen only one other traveler on the road thus far today and he did not stop to warm himself at my fire. Bidding him to do so proved worthless and so I have eaten my midday meal alone.

I must also note, with growing concern, that I fear I am being watched once again. I took a brief look at Ghilayn to see if goblins are about, but the sword offers no warning today. The meadows and woods on both sides of the road are thick with a lingering fog. It is not easy to spot a thief or a goblin in such cover and so I must travel with care. The shadows may be more than they seem.

7th Entry, Early Autumn, Year of the Sun

Solace at last.

Shivering cold and soaked to my bones, I was met at the door by the lady of the Inn of the Last Home, Tika Majere, and a cup of hot broth. The fair lady had been expecting me, as I knew she would be, and was at that moment preparing for my rain-drenched condition. A few minutes later I was submerged in a hot herbal bath and the weariness of travel drifted a little farther away with each pail of hot water.

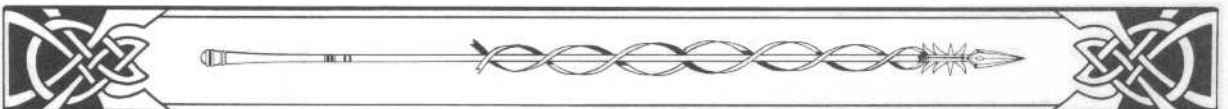
I am not the only one who enjoys a hot, soothing bath; I should have known Methyglynanaya would be in need of a wash. I am still quite new to this office of "parent" and so these mistakes I will make. Perhaps it was the scent of herbs and wildflowers that roused the baby dragon from sleep. With wings all a-flutter she jumped right into my bath and was at play in the bubbles at once.

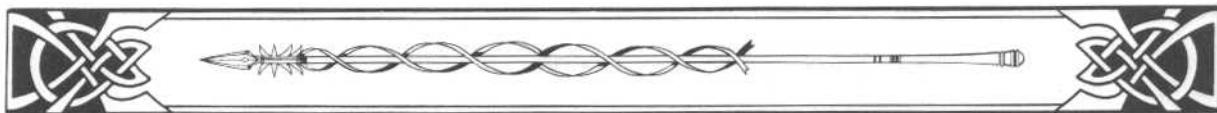


A soft rap at my door and the bathmaid returned with two more pails of hot water in hand. I will never forget the look on that poor maid's face when she first laid her eyes on wee Methy. How often does one see two tiny eyes, one green and one blue, peeking back at you from the bubbles in a bath? Methyglynanaya just blew more bubbles and I laughed like a fool. The maid disappeared in a flash.

8th Entry, Early Autumn, Year of the Sun

There comes a day in every person's life when the most reasonable course of action would be to pull the bearskin back over one's head and just stay in bed. Today was just such a day.





I had awakened well near midday to the gurgle of water being sloshed about the floor outside my room's door and the tempting aroma of freshly baked bread as it wafted through the open window in my room. Tempting indeed, for as I stretched my sleep-stiffened body and began to rise from my bed, only then did I notice that the bolt on my door was still thrown closed and my window was wide open when it, too, should have been locked shut. After so many years traveling in these often dangerous lands, I lock my doors and windows everywhere I go. I never sleep with my windows left wide open. Never.

It is at times like these that the hair at the back of one's neck bristles with warning and, again, staying in bed is usually the best solution. But I did not. I was too intent on closing my window, getting dressed, and heading down to the kitchen for some of Tika Majere's appetizing bread. My stomach had taken over and my wits were as dull as old swords. My second warning then arrived when the smell of fresh bread was smothered with the stench of goblin breath. A gauntleted fist then smashed my into my jaw, and I went down to the floor in a heap.

A short, rusty blade appeared at my throat; the blade's owner was a fat, filthy goblin clad in leathers and a half-rotted cloak. He knelt there, glaring at me and pinching my flesh. He let me know that he and others of his foul kind had been on my trail for days. Yet I could not decide, as the drool dripped from his lips, if I was to be his prisoner, his dinner, or both.

As I lay there on the floor at the knee of this goblin, I soon saw the reason for his silent patience: a second goblin was climbing stealthily through my room's open window. The second goblin was much smaller than my captor, a runt I would say, but he moved with the silent grace of a cat stalking a mouse. His loose-fitting rags made not a sound as he crept though my room and a moment later he, too, knelt and drooled over me. I got the distinct impression I was about to be dinner. Then the runt saw my pack at the foot of the bed.



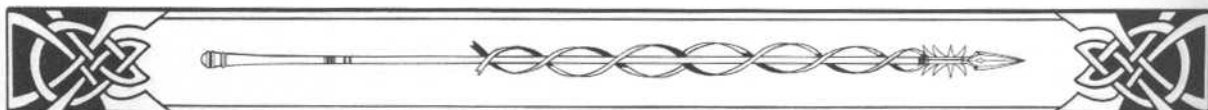
Once a thief, always a thief, as the old saying goes, and the runt of a goblin was just that. In seconds he had the flap of my pack open and his arms disappeared up to his shoulders as he eagerly rummaged inside. One by one, my possessions came out of my backpack and were tossed on the bed: my Dragon's Rose nectar, the honey, the pots and the pans, and all of my clothing. I prayed something would crash to the floor and alert my stalwart host Caramon Majere to my plight.

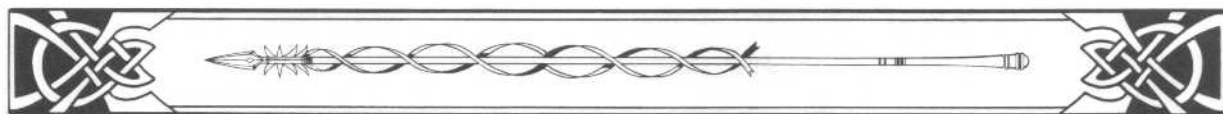
It was not to be. This rogue was too clever to make a mistake like that.

It was then, with the pack running empty and the chances of easy gold dwindling fast, that the runt discovered my enchanted long sword. An idea struck me. I muttered a belittling insult to the inquisitive runt, an insult aimed straight at his avarice. This earned me

two broken ribs from my impatient captor as his fist slammed down into my chest and his dagger inched up my throat to ensure my silence. The runt, however, took the bait.

Satisfied that I was once again subdued, the runt hefted my sword in one hand and slowly began to remove the scabbard with his free hand. As the sheath traveled down the length of that ensorcelled blade,





a soft blue light began to swirl about Ghilayn and the runt became excited at the prospect of wealth.

Here was a treasure worth a great deal of gold, if not several treasures, and I could see the greed burning brighter and brighter in his eyes as the sword gradually slid from its scabbard. An inch or two more and Ghilayn would be free. I could not help but smile a wee, crafty smile as I waited for Ghilayn to react.

Softly glows the bane of goblins . . . except when a goblin is stupid enough to hold it in his hands. Then the bane becomes a blue fire-blade, alive with fire from the forge of its birth, slicing through steel and flesh alike as though both were soft butter beneath a hot knife.

The runt screamed in pain when his hand—the hand holding Ghilayn—erupted in flames and was instantly reduced to nothing but bones. A skeletal hand was all that remained and the goblin dropped my sword to the floor. I knew then that my rescue would come soon, for such a scream could not go unnoticed. My salvation would be at hand and I would be ever grateful to my hosts and rescuers.

Or so I thought. Rescue, it seems, can take many forms.

Chaos ensued as the runt howled again and cursed me in the name of his Dark Queen. His dagger-wielding accomplice drew a thin crimson line at my neck. The door to my room met with several hefty blows as Caramon Majere and his two hefty sons tried to break it in, but the bolt held it closed. I could hear them calling to me, but I had not the breath to answer.

And then fate, or good fortune, intervened.

One does not expect to hear, even in the midst of confusion and curses, the roar of a dragon awakened. Well, this was more like the chitter of an angry chipmunk, but you get the idea. One does not *ever*, either by intent or by accident, take it upon himself to wake a sleeping dragon, even one that has two tiny eyes, one green and one blue, and the wings of a butterfly. It is a well-known fact that dragons love their sleep.

Dragons dream great dreams. They dream of distant planes and of far-off realms, and of the countless hoards of dragon treasures. They dream of the ancient times, of the birth of the world, and thus they dream of the birth of all dragons. Dragon dreams are thick with magic.

And so, I imagine, Methyglynanaya was just a tad peeved at having her dreamsleeper disturbed. She emerged from her wool sweater-nest, all flustered and hissing, and flew into the air above my captors' heads. Chittering and hissing, she circled and dodged and then hovered just out of hands' reach. Perhaps she was upset at the runt for swatting at her with his one good hand. Perhaps, too, it was the sight of "Daddy" about to have his throat slit.

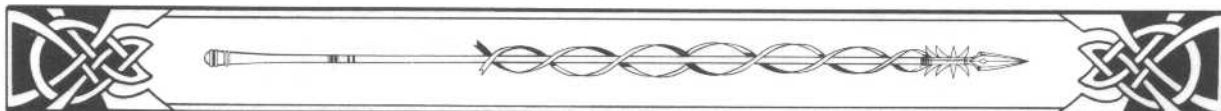
A moment later, and this I clearly recall, the brute at my throat made some surly comment about my wee Methy being nothing more than one of those pansy-elf butterflies he once saw in Qualinost and that "it" sort of looked like a lizard as well. You could have heard a pin dropping a hundred leagues away, never mind the destruction of my door as help (finally) arrived from the hallway, as it suddenly became very calm in my room. The two goblins then looked at each other, confused and surprised, and then they looked up at the "lizard."

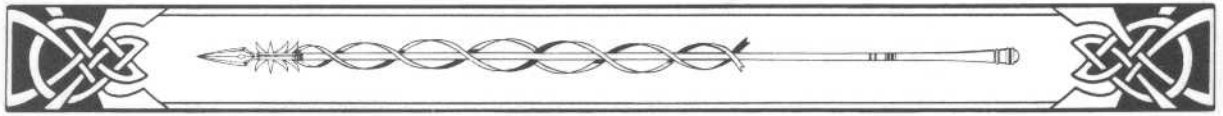
And then Methyglynanaya spoke. "Fluh-fluh-flutter . . . flutterbies."

I swear, m'lord, with Gilean as my witness, that a sliver of a smile then crept across her face, as though she had just put two and two together. Her eyes narrowed to two tiny slits and she looked down upon the runt and his friend. Hovering still, and grinning now, she began to giggle softly to herself. It was the lyrical laughter one might hear from an elven child at play in the woods, and I had heard that giggle before.

"Yessssss . . . flutterbies. *Flutterbies!*"

Those last words arrived with considerable force, an arcane force, and I knew then who my rescuer was. A brief instant later a rusty old dagger clattered to the floor and the fey silence was broken once more. The Majeres just stood at my room's shattered door, their mouths hanging open in wonder. I lay





back on the floor and relaxed as best I could. The “danger” just flitted and floated away.

As for Methyglynanaya, she went ecstatic and zoomed round the room. She had “found” two more butterflies to play with.

9th Entry, Early Autumn, Year of the Sun

With the previous details of my journey complete, m’lord, I am concluding this chapter of my journal with an exact description of the recipe I have used this season. You will also find two other recipes, included at the end, with which I have delighted many of our patrons in the past. I hope you will find them all to your pleasure.

I am also pleased to report that I have accepted the commission from m’lady Tika Majere to stock her “cellar” with some of my finer spirits and meads. Thus I shall remain here, in fine and pleasant company, until the end of the autumn and continue with my meadmaking.

With kindest regards,
Irlynmyer Glimmerleaf

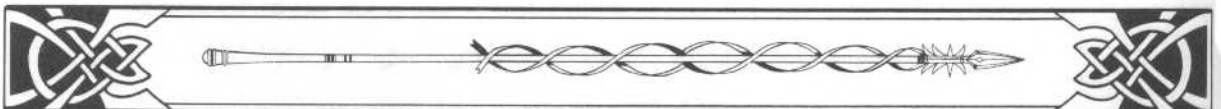
P.S. Never age your mead in a banshee’s lair.

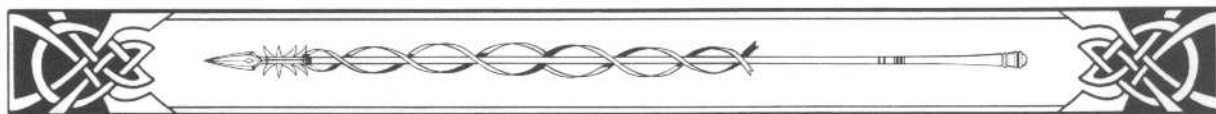
Irlynmyer’s Sparkling Methyglyn

This is a recipe for a spiced mead known as Methyglyn. The exact meaning of the word is now lost in Time, but as near as I can deduce, it is closely associated with our own word of “medicine.”

Ingredients:

- Twenty pounds fresh wildflower honey, preferably from a mountain meadow
- Two pounds fresh Dragon’s Rose nectar
- Ten whole cloves
- Five sticks cinnamon, crushed to a powder
- Juice of five lemons, carefully squeezed
- Ten whole, dried oak leaves
- One evening Harvest moonlight
- Three Dragon’s Rose blossoms, freshly picked
- One pinch dragon’s eggshell, finely powdered
- One handful Irish moss, cleaned and dry
- Three tankards of your favorite ale or dwarven bitter
- One packet Qualinost yeast
- Five gallons pure springwater
- One reservoir Patience





Notes on Method:

In a large copper pot over a hearth banked with embers, heat the springwater until wisps of steam can be seen. Add the whole cloves and cinnamon powder as well, but let the spices simmer for only a moment or two. Carefully add the wildflower honey and the Dragon's Rose blossoms to the spicy, hot water and stir well with a large wooden spoon. Be careful from this moment on, and gently heat the honeyed water until wisps of steam can be seen yet again. DO NOT let the honey burn on the bottom of the pot while you are mixing it into the water! Pour in the lemon juice, then add the oak leaves. The aroma should be delicate but not overly sweet.

Next, let the mead simmer for an hour or so and go have an ale. Maybe two. After all, this is *very* hard work. Return to the kitchen with replenished tankard in hand, and gently remove the lid of the pot. Using your wooden spoon, remove all the gunk that has floated to the surface, then stir the amber-colored mixture once more. Again, remove any scum that floats to the top and take the pot off the fire. Allow the mead to cool by the light of the full Harvest moon, then pitch in the yeast . . . and stand back. A few minutes later, the danger will have passed and the mead will be well on its way. Quaff your ale and relax.

For the next sevenday, let the mead bubble and ferment as it will. A rich, frothy scum will form on the mead but this is perfectly fine. To make doubly sure, hold a lit candle to the edge of the pot and watch the flame flicker out. This is clear proof of a fine batch of mead in the making. If the flame does not flicker out and, instead, you find yourself in the expanding fireball of a blue flame inferno . . . just kidding.

On the very next day, measure out a small handful of Irysh moss and then mix it thoroughly into the mead. The mead will have stopped fermenting by this time and it is necessary to remove the yeast and any other creatures that may be swimming about. Finally, gently mix in a single pinch of the finely powdered dragon's eggshell and watch as the golden liquid miraculously becomes as clear as pure crystal.

Carefully decant the pure mead out of your large copper pot and into the clean bottles you have ready. Fill each bottle to its shoulder, then add a pinch of Qualinost yeast and just enough Dragon's Rose nectar to fill the bottle to its neck. At this point you must quickly cork the bottles and tie down each cork. Leather thongs will do to tie down the corks, but the enchanted silk from a swallowtail butterfly's cocoon works best.

Now comes the hardest part of all. Take the filled bottles and set them away in the safety of your cool, dark wine cellar and leave them there until spring. During the long winter season, you may dream fondly of your mead, and of the revels it will inspire, but you may not drink it. For that is the wisdom of a well-made mead . . . and the last ingredient in the recipe: Patience.

Irlynmyer's Dragonfire Punch

This is a great recipe for any midwinter feast as it will warm both the spirit and the body.

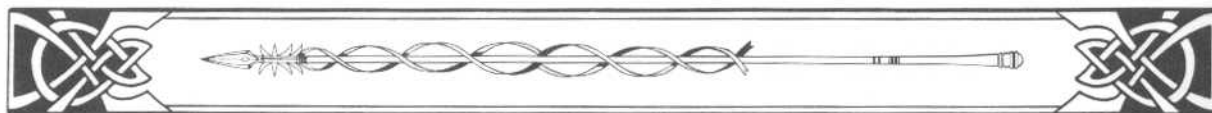
Ingredients:

- One gallon well-aged honey-mead brandy
- One cup sweet raisins or cherries
- Ten sticks cinnamon bark
- Juice of six lemons, freshly squeezed

Notes on Method:

Gently heat the honey-mead brandy in a covered pot until it is warm to the touch. Next, quickly mix in the raisins (or cherries, or both) the lemon juice and the cinnamon bark. Allow this to simmer for a few minutes more, and serve hot.





Irlynmyer's Black Mead

This recipe creates a sweet and full-bodied wine that will improve in a cellar over time.

Ingredients:

- Twenty pounds black currants, freshly picked
- Two pounds dried elderberries
- Juice of six lemons, freshly squeezed
- Ten pounds wildflower honey
- Three pinches yeast extract
- Large sheet of clean cheesecloth
- One packet Qualinost yeast
- Up to four gallons of pure springwater

Notes on Method:

In a large wooden container, mash the black currants thoroughly until all the fruit is crushed and the juice begins to run free. Mix in the lemon juice and set this mixture aside until later.

Using a large copper pot and a clean wooden spoon, gently heat half of your water (two gallons) and mix in all the wildflower honey. Vigorously stir this mixture, being careful not to let the honey burn at the bottom of the pot, and remove any scum that may float to the top. Allow the mixture to become hot to the touch.

When wisps of steam rise from the pot, this is the time to add the mashed fruit and all of its juice, too. Now add all the elderberries and stir until they are well soaked. Next, add enough springwater to bring the mead's volume up to five gallons and replace the lid upon the pot. Let the whole mixture become hot once again, then let it simmer for about ten minutes more.

After ten minutes, remove the pot from the fire and allow it to cool overnight. In the morning, when the liquid is cool to the touch, take the yeast extract and mix it in thoroughly.

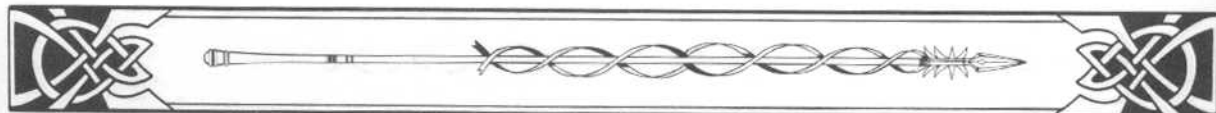
Last comes the yeast. Just pitch it right in, stir it into the mead, and then replace the lid on the pot.

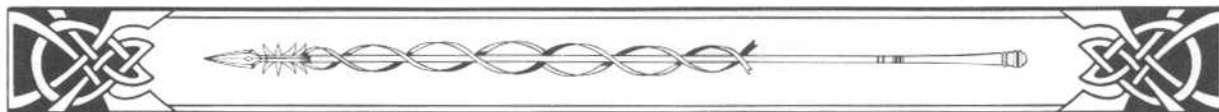
For the next three or four days, let the mead ferment and froth as it will. At the end of this time, take the cheesecloth and strain the mead through it and into a clean pot. Be careful to strain out *all* of the black currants and elderberries; they are no longer needed. Take the new mead and set it in a cool, dark place to finish fermenting over the next three or four weeks.

When the fermentation is complete, the mead will begin to clear and the dead yeast will settle to the bottom of the pot. The mead is now ready to be drunk, but the finest flavor will develop if it is bottled and cellared for at least one winter. Be encouraged, though, for this mead will cellar for a great time indeed and the results will be impressive.

Patience!

A note to the novice meadmaker: In the aforementioned recipes, some very exotic ingredients are mentioned and recommended. It should be noted, however, that some of these need not be used, as they merely expedite the process of meadmaking while others have mundane but perfectly useful substitutes. Please note:





Clarifying Agents (Finings)

1) Isinglass (essence of fish bladders), gelatin or egg whites may be used in place of powdered dragon eggshell.

2) Time. Mead will quite often clear by itself, with the aid of two or three careful rackings, in two or three months' time. This is the time-honored and traditional way to clear a mead and by doing so a mead-maker will retain more of the delicate essence of mead.

Yeast

1) When making a mead, sparkling or otherwise, allow the fermentation to continue for as long as it will. Rack the mead after seven days and then again two to three weeks later. You cannot hasten this process without magical means. At the end of two to three months, the mead should have cleared. This is your sign that the fermentation has long since finished. If it is a "still" mead you desire, rack and bottle from here. If it is a sparkling mead you desire, follow the instructions for priming as indicated above and wire down your corks. After that, the standard methods for sparkling wine and the recorking of such will apply.

Nutrients and Acids

1) One level teaspoonful of yeast nutrient should be used, per gallon, for the best results. Honey will ferment without such nutrient, but it will do so at a very slow rate. The choice is yours, and therefore optional.

2) Acids can be added at the rate of ½ ounce per gallon of mead. Lemon juice (citric acid) and oak leaves are useful, too. The choice, again, is yours to make. I also recommend a "tri-acid" or three-acid blend that can be purchased at any good winemaker's shop.

Do not be concerned if your mead takes more than two or three months to ferment and several more to clear naturally. I typically take six to eight months to make my finest meads, using wine yeasts that is, and the result is always worth the wait!

An Elven Haiku Portrait

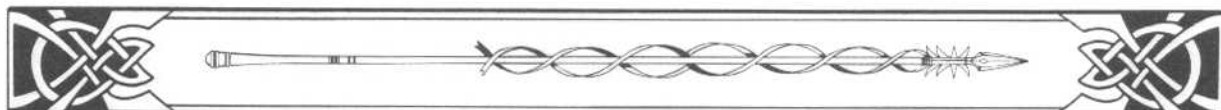
*Lonely mountain slopes;
Thunderous steps, closer now,
Elven bows aimed true.*

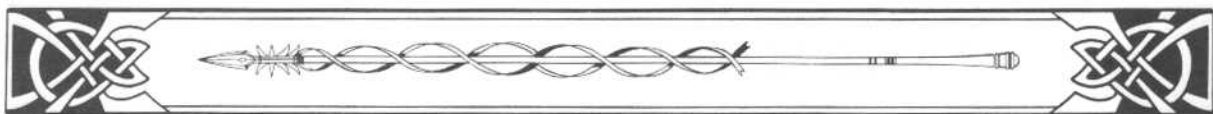
*Swift wing, feathered white;
Talons rake with arcane wrath,
Griffin, mage, are one.*

*Glitter, ancient gold;
Flaming breath and wyrm's fey mist,
Giantbane, behold!*

*Tall, strong, black-steel clad
Ancient tears on vengeful blade,
Mourn, O warrior's son.*

—Irlynmyer Glimmerleaf





The Vallenwoods

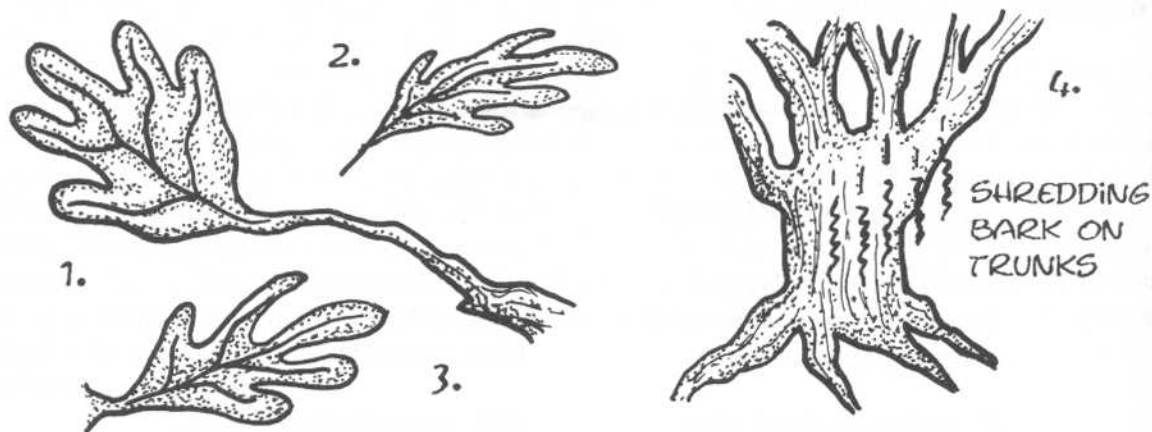
Day 102

Final Summary of Notes
on Observations of Vallenwood, Solace
Recorder: L'Indasha Yman, Druidess

The vallenwood is deciduous, dicotyledonous, and the largest native tree I have observed. The specimens I am describing stand approximately two to three hundred feet in height. This forest shows no sign of decline, so there is no terminal height expectation. I have no record of where the name "vallenwood" originates. Natives queried almost always reply that "They've just always been called that." I am unable to observe a cross section of wood, since I have observed no dead trees. This forest seems to range from east to west about four miles, and from north to south, about three miles. I have never observed the vallenwood to grow anywhere else, but cannot assume this to be the only population.

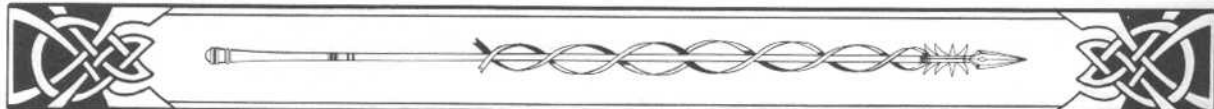
Leaves

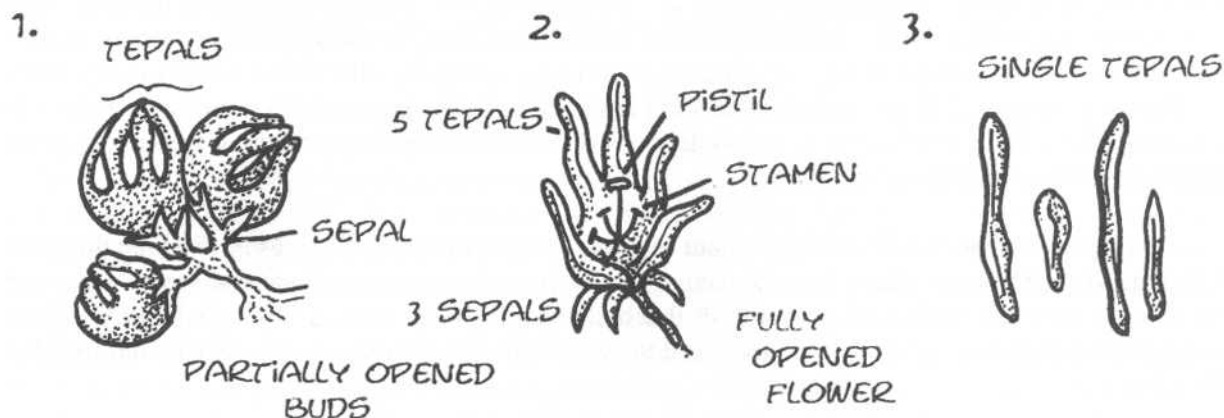
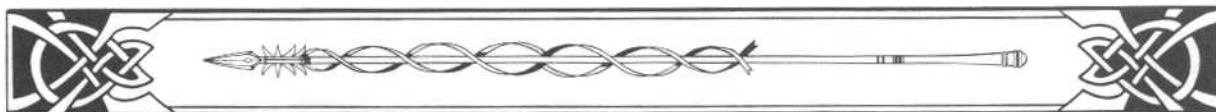
At least a foot across, with reticulate venation. Five unequal lobes, hand-shaped. They appear after flowers drop in spring, in lush clusters of twenty to thirty, with the first color a yellow-green, maturing to blue-green, and finally, in fall, changing to red, gold, orange, and interesting combinations of all three. Leaves take on a transparent quality, and when the sunlight strikes them, they seem to glow. A forest of vallenwood in fall is an unforgettable sight.



Flowers

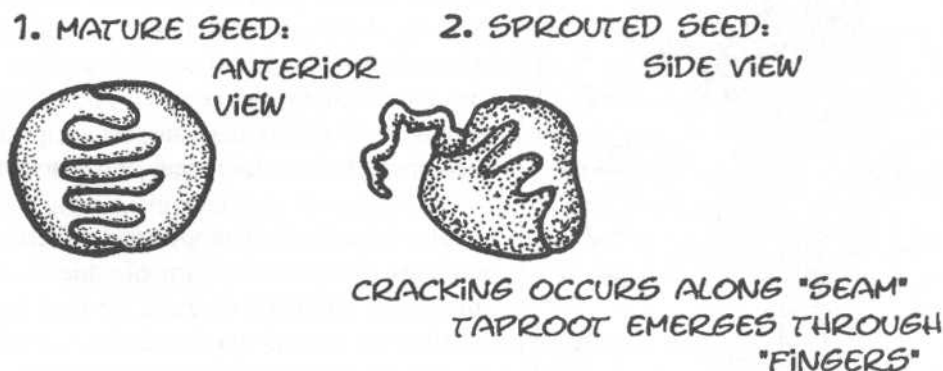
White, twelve inches when fully open. Nocturnal. Five tepals of varying size, sometimes doubling when rainfall is above normal. Flat presentation, one central pistil, five stamens bearing orange pollen. Curious, hand-shaped arrangement of tepals.



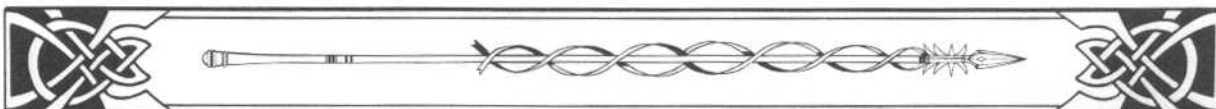


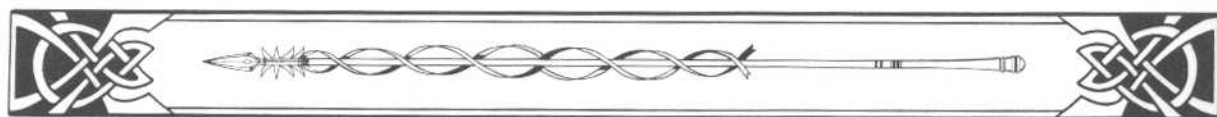
Seeds

Appear after about five days, provided fertilization occurs. Golden, composed of three layers, the middle of which is edible and flavored much like cinnamon, but slightly sweeter. (Natives make pastry out of this, very popular in the Inn.) About twenty-seven inches in diameter, carried in terminate clusters of three to five, ripening at the end of a two-year cycle. I have observed from repeated experimentation, that it takes the seeds about a year to germinate, but once sprouting has occurred, the tree shoots up rather quickly, and can grow from ten to twenty feet a year, provided the rainfall is adequate (about thirty inches per annum). The seeds are shaped like clasped hands, covered in a sort of wrap-around shell that makes for the correct amount of cracking when they hit the ground from at least a hundred feet. The seeds are quite stable and tough until they fall, but the husks then split along the proper lines just enough to allow for the taproot to find the soil.



The vallenwood's niche in the ecosystem can be viewed roughly from four levels. At the lowest, various vermin seemed rather at home in the shedding bark that strips down the base every year, since the tree also expands its girth to support its height. Besides the usual irritating borers and sawflies, there are

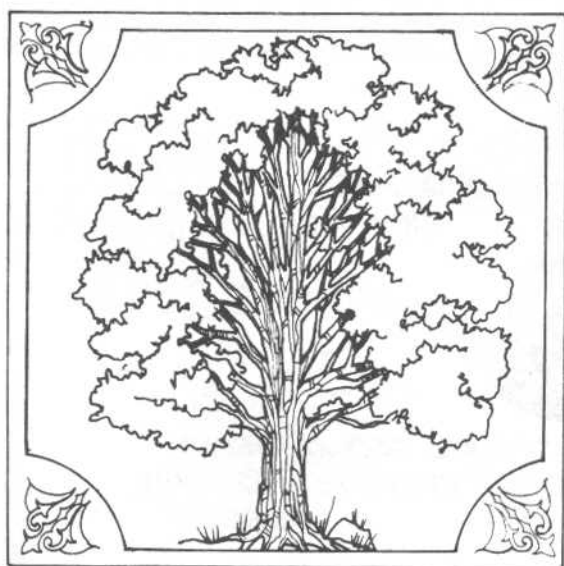




shrews, one of which has an umbrella-shaped snout and prefers as its primary food source the little green ants that live just under the splitting bark. Feeding upon the shrews, I record several species of nocturnal, carnivorous bats that probably live close by or perhaps even in the vallenwood's own canopy. Since the canopy is so very high up, grasses of all sorts and full-sunlight-tolerant plants grow beneath the vallenwood. The foliage, at this time, is not so dense as to provide much shade except in the middle of the day when most needed by the residents.

At the lower middle range of height, about seventy-five feet up, I found the usual rodents; the gray-tailed markle, a climbing, gentle, ground-feeding, furbearing species of marsupial that prefers to nest in the boles of the trunk; and a few weaver birds that build hanging nests from the discarded shreds of bark they gather from the lower level of the trees. All these animals favor leafless homes and are not found in the canopy.

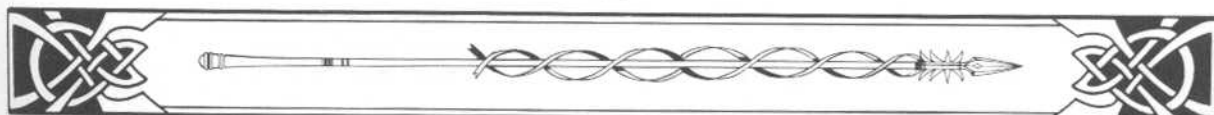
At the next clearly distinct level, about one hundred feet, the vallenwoods have become host to dwellings built by the dominant races. Massive structures, including the Inn, are easily supported at this height. The tree is relatively bare of native species due to its human population, but there is, however, a type of moth that gathers together in foot-wide clusters during the spring mating season and emits a type of phosfire, or natural light, when the communities become large enough. The effect is remarkable and very entertaining as the spheres of glowing blue-winged moths dart through the night among the newly opened flowers. This species is the chief pollinator of the vallenwood; their roving, lighted colonies tumble from bloom to bloom all night long, and feast on the pollen exclusively. This event draws regular crowds of spectators from the Inn and occurs only one night a year, at the rise of the red moon.

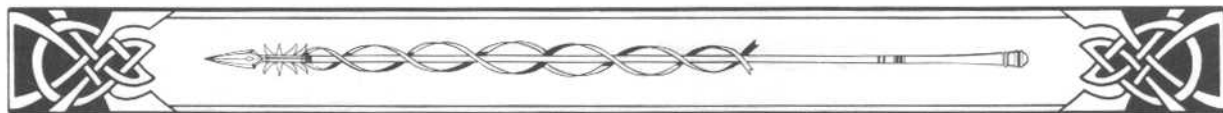


The highest level, the canopy, is favored by several types of songbirds, all common to the area, indeed to most areas of Solace, and one or two notable specimens of flying squirrels. One of these gives no care at all as to camouflage, probably because it tastes so bad to predators that they never bother it. It has a black-and-white spotted coat and seven-inch incisors. Populations are controlled by the squirrels' peculiarly unreliable judgment of distance. (I suspect astigmatism.) They feed upon the immature seeds of the tree itself.

Also found in the canopy are numbers of bryophytic plants, the natural origins of which I cannot determine. The vallenwoods have become host to them, whether by natural species drift or accidental introduction by the dominant races through their extensive travels. The heavy, bulbous growth of these yellow, clinging mosses may pose a threat to the delicate canopy. They seem to be at least partially parasitic and have no natural enemies that I have observed. . . .

L'Indasha Yman





Rules of the Minotaur Circus: The Bloody Path

To the rest of Ansalon, the minotaur system of determining who will be the emperor—by rite of combat—seems as chaotic and alien as the race itself. Detractors would say that there exists neither the stability of the inherited monarchy nor the careful thought that precedes the appointments of new leaders by a governing council, such as takes place in the land of Solamnia. A minotaur can become emperor simply because he is the strongest, not the most capable of command.

The minotaurs, on the other hand, if they were ever to deign to reply to such unworthy critics, would likely point out that monarchies are capable of producing a line of inept rulers—often weak or insane—kept in power only by virtue of their bloodline. As for an electoral system, the general tendency of the lesser races to constantly plot and deal before such maneuvering makes many an appointed leader's right to rule suspect.

Such potential disasters are avoided, the minotaurs would say, by the thoroughness of their system, which is far more complex than simply challenging the present emperor to combat. If that were the case, each ruler would last but a few days, succumbing more from exhaustion than the abilities of his adversaries. Instead, only a select few champions are allowed to issue a challenge and only by virtue of their proven merits are they granted the opportunity to test themselves against the emperor.

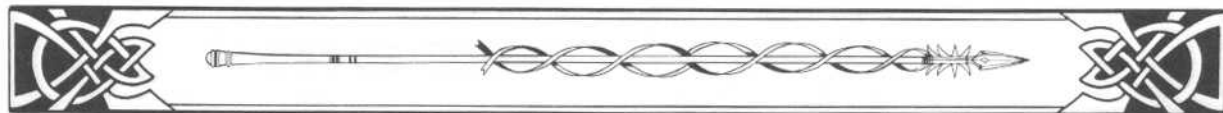
The path to ultimate supremacy begins early. The young are taught something of the value of competition by the time they have learned to walk. (All minotaurs are apparently precocious by human standards.) By the time they reach adolescence, they are nearly seasoned warriors. They have competed in races—foot, horseback, sailing—and trained against one another in both unarmed and armed combat. They have been taught the essentials of military strategy. Some have already fought in their first battles and those with scars bear them proudly. It is at this point that those who will some day be champions begin to reveal themselves.

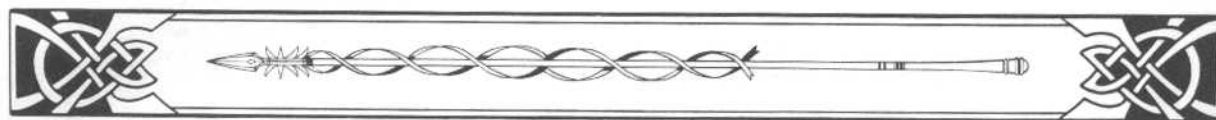
It is at this point that the testing truly commences.

All healthy minotaurs, both male and female, are required to enter a series of basic competitions within two years of reaching adolescence. The training for these games is similar to that which they have received all their lives, only now the intensity is increased a hundredfold more. Now they will compete against other clans from around the various regions of their kingdom. In order to facilitate such great numbers of contestants, both Mithas and Kothas—the minotaurs' twin kingdoms—utilize eight lesser circuses, smaller arenas, situated near the outer edges of the four quarters of the capital cities, essentially forming a circle. Even these lesser circuses are large enough to hold hundreds of spectators. The circle is, of course, no coincidence; each arena represents one of the eight members of the Supreme Circle, who govern both kingdoms in the name of the emperor.

The young minotaurs compete in races, combats, and activities designed to showcase their strength, dexterity, and intelligence. Contestants may choose to forego certain events if they want to concentrate on one skill over another. Minotaurs who are not fleet of foot must participate in at least one race, for example, but then they may substitute further races with such competitions as wrestling, spear-throwing, or armed combat. There is no shame in this; minotaurs understand and appreciate that skills vary. It is important to know one's individual strengths and then to seek to excel at them.

At the end of nine days, each minotaur has had the opportunity to compete in at least nine different





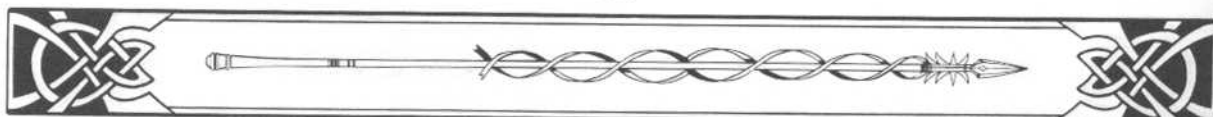
contests. Those who desire to proceed no further may reenter normal life, taking on apprenticeships in such occupations as herding, cloth-making, food preparation, and other lesser yet still honorable trades. Some may even be fortunate enough to find smithing or dockwork, although all, of course, are expected to redeem themselves with further experience in the arenas at some point later in their lives. Meanwhile, they continue to pursue their military training, which is one aspect of minotaur life as constant and unvarying as the race's conquest of all Ansalon is believed inevitable.

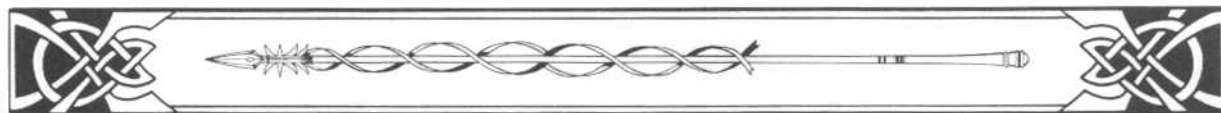
For successful contestants, the period after the preliminary competitions is when they begin to realize their potential and reap the first rewards of their demonstrated superiority. Ship captains, military officers, state clerics, and government officials are among the spectators, as well as minotaurs of high rank in countless other fields and specialties. Although the paths are freely chosen, the love of the sea is strong in the race, so it is not all that surprising that many young champions opt to become sailors.

For most, this is the height of ambition. Should they survive personal duels, battles, and storms, their rise in rank often concludes with a naval captaincy. For minotaurs, this is a proud and lucrative achievement since a captain may come to own his or her own vessel. A long career as a sailor is a badge whose honor reflects upon the clan.

Yet for some minotaurs this is not enough. For some, the call of the circus is so strong, they must return to competition. Each clan grooms those they think will serve best as their exemplars . . . and possibly as their emperors. Those minotaurs who have completed basic tournament may apply for a First Challenge—the ritual combat that marks the applicant as one seeking to raise his or her ranking. Some simply use this step to increase the odds of quicker promotion to an officer's rank or to make themselves more meritorious in the eyes of the state clerics or the Supreme Circle, whose agents attend every event. But the others have their eyes on the crown.

Entrants in the First Challenge may either face one another with a single weapon of choice or, if they so desire, request unarmed combat. To be victorious, one must either draw first blood or—if unarmed in combat—bring down one's adversary. While accidents do sometimes happen, killing an opponent at this stage is discouraged as being both costly and the mistake of an unskilled warrior. A challenger must show a combination of strength, skill, and intelligence to prove the potential to be a true First Champion.





Those who lose a First Challenge may reenter the circus, but they must do so at a lower level. They have to fight others of equal standing and garner three victories before being allowed to rise to the ranking that the victors of the First Challenge have already attained.

Minotaurs with first victories are free to challenge many with rankings above their own, save for those on the Lists of Champions. Each of the eight arenas carries such a list; these ten minotaurs are considered the best of their regions. Minotaurs with First Rankings based on not only recorded victories but also on battlefield merit may challenge anyone else listed as "active" in their own arena and also in any of the other seven arenas. They may not yet face opponents from the other minotaur kingdom, albeit unofficial challenges are not discouraged as there is always a desired element of rivalry between Mithas and Kothas.

A minotaur who spends the rest of his or her life accepting and making such challenges, without ever attaining the right to challenge those on the highest Listing, can still rise in status. Any warrior capable of surviving the rigors of the arenas for a period of years warrants respect, for unlike the games in Istar, there is no subterfuge or play-acting. More important, while combat to the death is not encouraged at this level, deaths do occur . . . often, in fact. Blooded warriors now, minotaurs tend to make full use of their abilities.

It should be noted that death in the arena is a mark of honor. A state cleric always accompanies the bearers of the corpse home to the family, presenting the lost one to the family with a proud announcement of that minotaur's achievements in life. In return, the family is encouraged to donate money to the church, so that the priesthood may continue this honorable tradition for the next who dies.

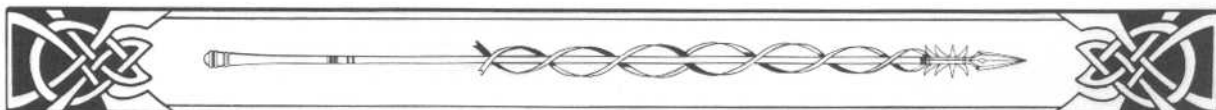
If a minotaur has earned the right—through a combination of victories and personal achievements—to oppose a champion of the Listings, he or she must apply to issue a formal challenge. If two or more champions desire to meet an up-and-comer, the right to battle goes to that minotaur with the highest status. Thus the Listings might alter dramatically if, by luck or skill, the Grand Champion of that arena happens to be defeated by a relative novice. Then the newly-crowned Grand Champion will likely find himself contested by more than a few veterans seeking to take advantage of the turn of events.

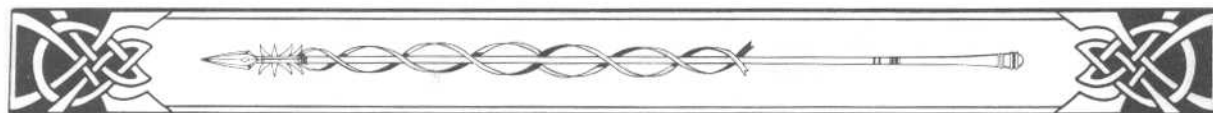
A battle to the death is not obligatory even among the Listings, but here there is always some finality. A champion either meets an honorable and glorious demise or dispatches a worthy adversary. The ceremonies held for the honored are quite elaborate and expensive. Those who are defeated but remain alive may return, without taint—though possibly with scars or lifelong injuries—to second status or workday activity.

Challenges to champions must always be issued at the beginning of each month and must be answered midway through that month. A champion will answer up to three in that period. No one may be challenged who is away on a voyage or doing battle with the lesser races to the southwest. In case the one challenged dies by outside circumstance, the Grand Champion will face the challenger as a matter of courtesy. This ensures that no one who has reached the Listings grows lax.

However, despite exalted status, a Grand Champion is not guaranteed the right to challenge the emperor. A Grand Champion may entreat such an opportunity, but unless the Circle deems the champion to be of truly exceptional merit, the minotaur must still face one more series of challenges. He or she must face his counterparts in the Great Circus.

Although there are two kingdoms, there is only one Great Circus. The grandest, the largest of the arenas, the Great Circus is based in Nethosak, the imperial city, located in Mithas. In the Circus matters of justice are settled in the minotaur fashion, i.e., to the death. Personal duels by ranking minotaurs are fought in the Circus. Huge games, featuring the best warriors and athletes in action against the prison-





ers, beasts, and each other take place in the Circus. It is also where, if a champion survives long enough, he or she will finally meet the emperor.

One Grand Champion may challenge another at any time, regardless of whether both are from the same minotaur kingdom. If the challenge is accepted, (and only under rare circumstances would it be refused) the two minotaurs meet in the Great Circus as the highlight of a special event. Only a challenge against the emperor draws more spectators. Special representatives or even members of the Supreme Circle are among those in attendance. The emperor does not generally attend, but he is represented by one or more of his trusted aides. It is a wise ruler who knows his potential opponents well. Overconfident emperors make for leaders with brief reigns.

The Grand Champions meet in single combat. Being armed or unarmed is the option of the challenged. Rules are simple here—fight to win. Death is more common at this stage, as both know well the implications of the outcome. Whoever wins is only a step away from the throne. A champion does not want to leave an opponent behind who now knows his or her abilities and weaknesses.

There is no time limit on the contest. A gong signals the two to begin and only the sound of the gong commands the two to separate. The gong will sound only if the duel goes on too long with no apparent advantage to either minotaur. Anyone hitting a blow after the gong sounds risks losing honor. If the two are fighting in armed combat, each champion may now select a new weapon, if desired. The gong will sound again and the two minotaurs once more begin the struggle. Legend has it that there have been duels that have lasted more than a day, although an hour is more typical.

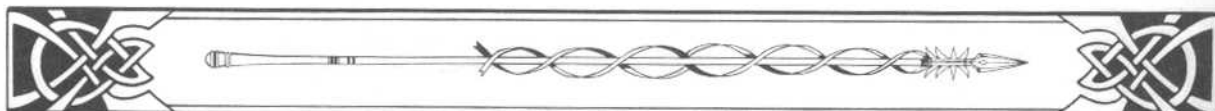
At last, there is only one. Standing over the bleeding form of a defeated adversary, the victor may issue a challenge there and then to the emperor. Few do, however, for it is better for a minotaur's status if he or she can claim more than one victory over other Grand Champions. Each victory strengthens both the claim and the minotaur's following. If a minotaur attains the title of Supreme Champion, wealth and fame follow. To become Supreme Champion, a minotaur must defeat fifteen of his or her counterparts. Then he or she is rated by the Supreme Circle as the greatest gladiator in the Circus.

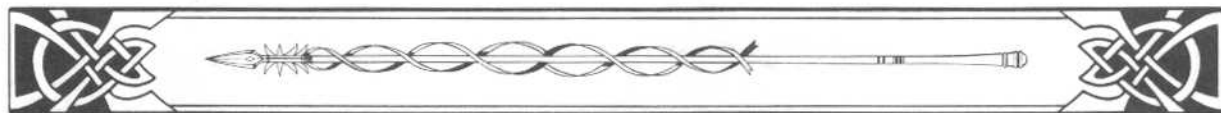
Due to the pressing tasks of the throne, the emperor need not enter the arena, except in response to legitimate challenges. Some do, challenging those they see as dangerous and ambitious newcomers. Yet, if the Supreme Champion calls for combat, the emperor will generally respond quickly. To delay too long will start rumors of weakness or cowardice. This can cause the Supreme Circle to set the duel without the emperor's permission. (It should be noted that the members of the Circle, like the state priesthood's council, are chosen from within a select group. Circle members may have achieved their positions through duels in the arenas, but most matters of selection are dealt with by other ruling members or, according to rumor, in smaller, private arenas.)

The combat between emperor and challenger is an event of the greatest magnitude, happening on average only four times a year, although the number has been as little as one and even as high as over two dozen—the latter the result of the minotaur ruler making preemptory challenges of his own. The Supreme Circle also has the right to make special dispensations for certain minotaurs, allowing some who are not Supreme Champions to meet the emperor. This circumstance is extremely rare.

The Great Circus is filled to overflowing for the extraordinary event. Minotaurs gather from both kingdoms and even if they cannot get seating, they stand outside the Circus and make bets on the outcome. The priesthood and the Circle attend. The empire virtually stops in its work. Food and drink flow in abundance, for this combat represents the pinnacle of minotaur prowess. Here challenger and emperor must prove who has the right to lead the race . . . at a dire cost to the loser.

Except under rare circumstances, this is a struggle to the death. Long ago, the minotaurs realized that





former emperors, left alive, fomented division among the people. Few who have risen to the august position would be satisfied to retire. Their continued presence would undermine the authority of the present ruler, as happens in some of those lands where humans vote in a new leader every four or six years. Therefore, to become emperor means eliminating one's predecessor. Killing the Supreme Champion ends, for the time, the threat to the emperor's rule and makes other challengers think twice about trying their own hand against him.

The combat is virtually identical to other competitions in all ways, except that the boundaries of the combat area are generally much smaller than at any other stage. More important, in the duel between emperor and Supreme Champion, the battle is not fought on the ground, but on a raised platform in the very center of the Great Circus. Made of wood and standing some ten feet high and ten yards across, the platform is designed to be slowly revolved by hand (in this case the hands of some dozen minotaurs working for the arena), thus giving all an excellent view and, not coincidentally, making the combat even more challenging. The outer edge of the platform is painted in the red and brown colors that represent the empire. The top is left plain, the better to see the bloody stains of previous duels.

Armed with only a single weapon of choice and a small metal shield that generally bears either the clan or personal emblem of the combatant, the two must begin the moment the signal is given and the platform starts to rotate. The two do battle until one dies. If one should fall from the platform, the duel continues unless that gladiator dies from a broken neck or is paralyzed. A broken arm, even a broken leg, is not enough to stop the duel. If both legs are useless, the injured minotaur may surrender although most would rather die in the arena than live a cripple. It is, however, the right of the winning minotaur to decide the loser's fate. If there is honor in the death, so be it. If there is more honor in allowing the opponent to heal and then resume the duel at some later date, the dominant warrior may grant the injured one the gift of temporary life.



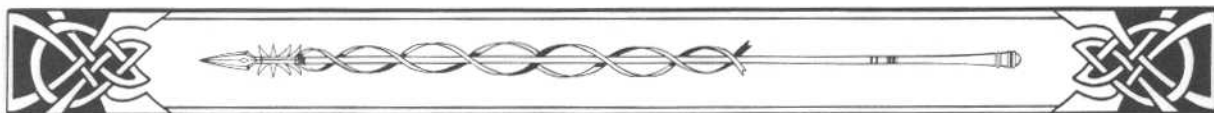
The platform continues to rotate throughout the combat. If one minotaur or the other loses a weapon, they fight on. No new weapons are issued, even if both minotaurs are disarmed. Then they must rely on strength and agility.

Combat generally lasts less than an hour, due to the intensity. Both know that the first to gain the advantage is most often the victor and the victor is the only one who will finish alive. To minotaurs, a quick strike is more honorable than a slow, cautious dance of attack and retreat. Yet strategy often wins out over a warrior who simply wields strength and speed.

In the end, there is but one. A new emperor or the returning, victorious emperor is honored guest at a great feast, where both the state priesthood and the Supreme Circle affirm the right of rulership. A new emperor will be escorted to the imperial quarters and presented with everything his predecessor owned. A returning emperor receives the loser's belongings, presented to him at the height of the feast, placed at his feet by representatives or relatives of the fallen warrior.

Once more, the empire returns to the task of building up its strength for the day when all Ansalon will be the domain of the minotaur race. All emperors agree on the importance and inevitability of the race's destiny. He or she is the symbol of its ever-growing might. The other minotaurs are encouraged to excel and thereby push that day of conquest nearer. There are few changes, just a stronger and more determined emperor at the helm.





Elven Haiku

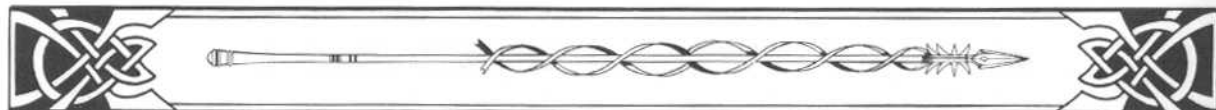
Citadel of rock;
Clouds gather and thunder roars,
Death upon the winds.

Fortress, flying rock;
Dragons scream and circle high,
Shadows on the land.

Eyes of evil fire;
Forsaken soul, honor lost,
Death and nightmares charge.

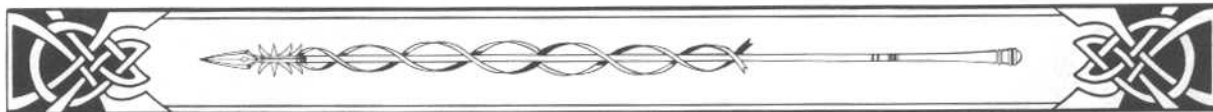
Ancient earthborne souls;
Children of the ageless world,
Sleep, O ancient wyrms.

—Irlynumyer Glimmerleaf





The Music
of Krynn

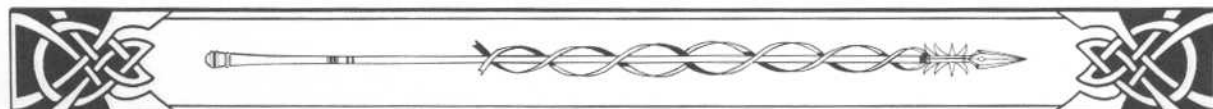


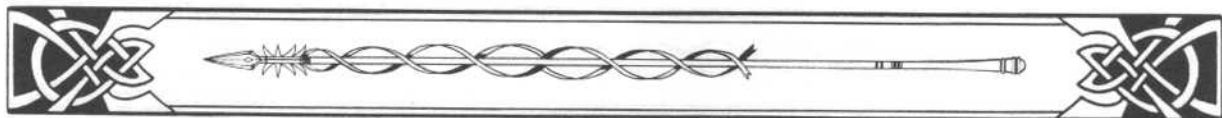
Fanfare for the Golden General

It is said that three ardent male friends who played horns and followed Lauralanthalasa to battle Takhisis and her Forces of Darkness sounded this fanfare for the Golden General as she marched past them. Although this is a lovely tale, and even though there seems to be some historical evidence in its favor, more credence is given to the possibility that Aldwan Medhurian, the renowned Horn Maker of Palanthis, composed this fanfare. It follows his style far more closely than that of any other Krynnish musician.

This piece begins with a single trumpet. It builds into its parts after the first two measures, adding richness with the resting chords by Measure 4. The feeling is open and majestic. In playing, the triplets should be crisp and accented instead of slurred or imprecise. Unlike other works of its type, this fanfare ends quietly, as if the Golden General disappeared into the distance leaving only the beguiling memory of her presence.

Notes and Arrangement by Mirrashar the Elven Bard





11

11

11

16

16

16

21

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21

mp

mp

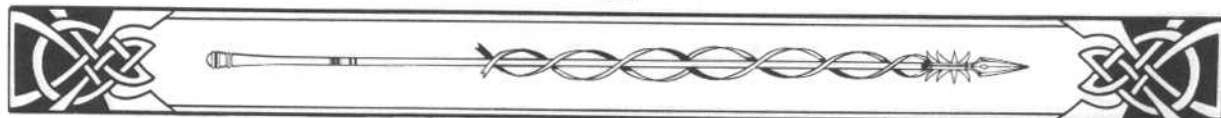
mp

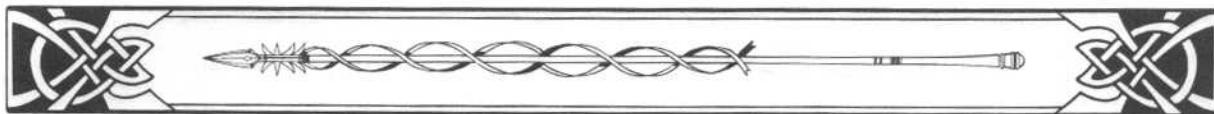
mf

f

ff

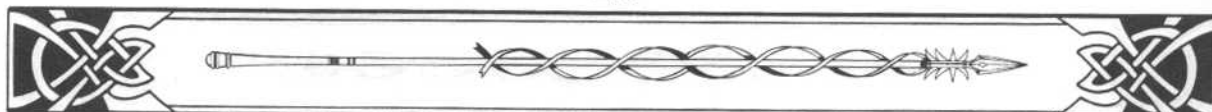
Three systems of musical notation, each consisting of three staves. The first system (measures 11-15) features treble clefs and includes triplets and crescendo/decrescendo hairpins. The second system (measures 16-20) includes the dynamic marking *mp* and triplets. The third system (measures 21-25) includes the dynamic markings *mf*, *f*, and *ff*, along with crescendo/decrescendo hairpins.

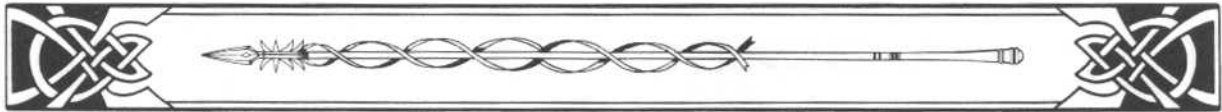




Three staves of music, each starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first staff is marked with a measure number of 26. The second staff is also marked with a measure number of 26. The third staff is marked with a measure number of 26. The music consists of a series of notes, including a triplet of eighth notes marked with a '3' and a 'mf' (mezzo-forte) dynamic marking. The notes are connected by a slur, and there are wedge-shaped markings indicating a crescendo or decrescendo.

Three staves of music, each starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first staff is marked with a measure number of 31 and a 'pp' (pianissimo) dynamic marking. The second staff is also marked with a measure number of 31 and a 'pp' dynamic marking. The third staff is marked with a measure number of 31 and a 'pp' dynamic marking. The music consists of a series of notes, including a triplet of eighth notes marked with a '3' and a 'pp' dynamic marking. The notes are connected by a slur, and there are wedge-shaped markings indicating a crescendo or decrescendo.





Elven Love Song

Elven parents love to hear this piece performed for their daughters because it indicates a young male elf's serious intentions toward courtship. Usually the lover and a friend who plays a flute arrive at the house of the beloved just as Solinari begins silvering the night. They usually try to position themselves close to the elven maid's bedroom window. Three rules must be followed after this: the singer must reveal his name either before or after the song, the beloved's parents must hear both the music and the name, and the singing must not falter. If the suitor's voice breaks or he stops sometime during the song for any reason except for the rests indicated, his intentions are no longer regarded as serious. Needless to say, a goodly number of suitors have been thwarted by sore throats, sudden coughs, and nervousness.

Although in each verse the number of word syllables are the same, the music does not repeat itself. This was done by the composer (his or her name has been lost to the depths of time) to represent the many aspects of love. It is said that Lauralanthalasa once sang this song to Tanthalas Half-Elven to prove her love for him. Considering that Laurana's feelings made her follow Tanis into the war, this legend is credible.

Compiled by Mirrashar the Elven Bard

Elven Traditional/With Intense Feeling

Voice

Flute

1

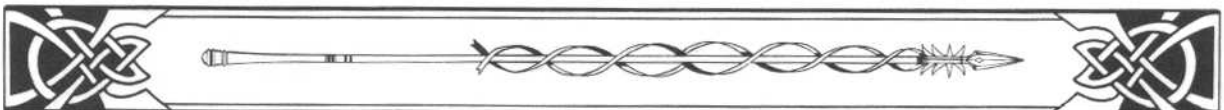
5

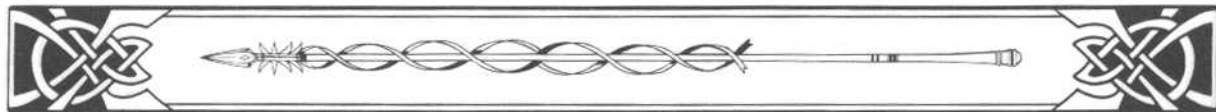
Look, Look how_moon - light doth ca - res Your

9

skin, soft, pale, and warm, And sum - mons_moon - stone es - sens - es that_

9





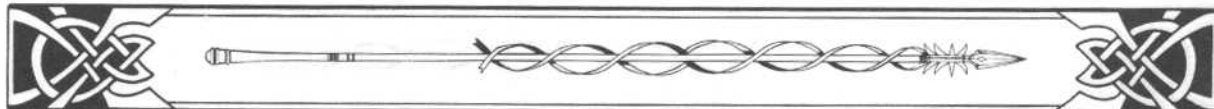
13 glint a - long your arm, That_ glint a - long your arm.

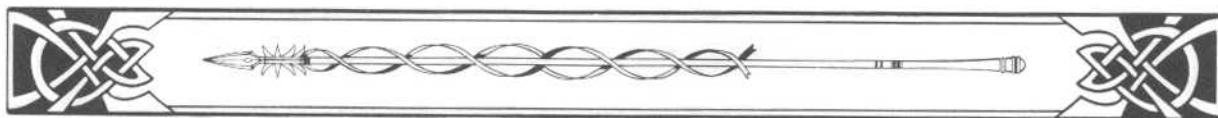
17 Gold darts_ through your tress - es fair Like am - ber caught and_ caged. And_

21 in your point - ed shad - owed ear Are am - e - thysts ar - rayed_ Are_

25 am - e - thysts ar - rayed.

29 Sil - ver_ sparks your lap - is eye with





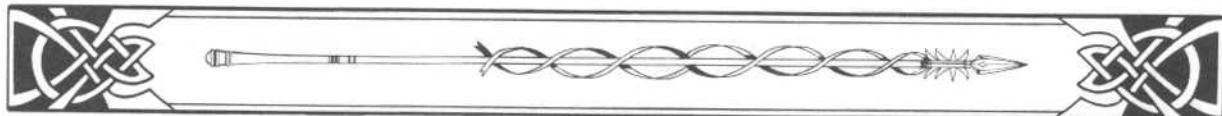
33 ar - dent_ pas - sion's_ gleam Kin - dling fire that_ doth_ de - ny Pla -

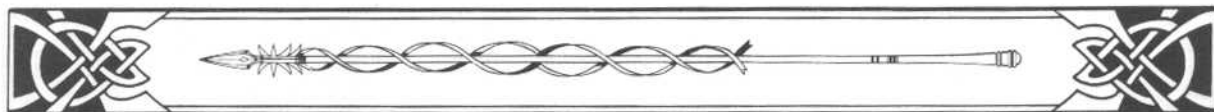
37 ton - ic love se - rene, Pla - ton - ic love_ se - rene.

41 Look how moon - light doth ca - res Your el - e - gant, lithe form,

45 Grace - ful_ maid who sum - mons forth My love's sweet pain - ful storm, My

49 love's sweet pain - ful storm.





53

So with - in dense qui - et_ night We_

53

57

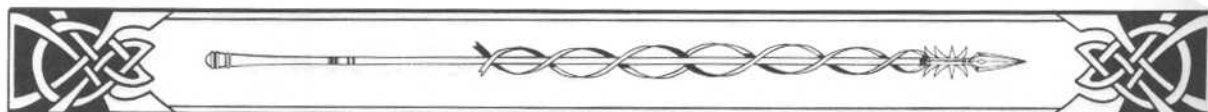
watch the stars a - bove_ Let - ting their_ e - ter - nal flight Set_

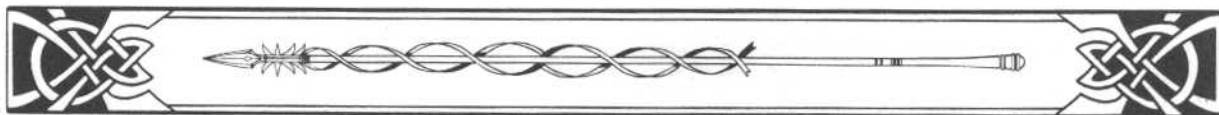
57

61

rings a - bout our_ love, Set_ rings a - bout_ our love.

61





Kender Hum n' Whistle March

This March can be heard whenever a number of kender decide to travel together. Although the melody is sweet and lively, the music can sometimes sound rather raucous depending on the kender in the group and where they are going to or coming from. Although performed with tremendous vivacity, the melody and variations are never the same twice through because kender are very inventive with this march.

The listener first hears the tune a long way off and may wonder at the strange sounds that start long before the music: snapping of fingers, clapping of hands in various rhythms, stomping of feet. The rhythms grow in complexity as more and more kender join in. Some kender hum against their hands, which are formed into hollow fists, adding a different resonance to the singing, or whip their hoopaks through the air. A few blow against their thumbs into hollowed fists, making a sound very much like that of mourning doves. The latter sound has a range limited to five or six notes, but kender enjoy adding the haunting hoots to their march.

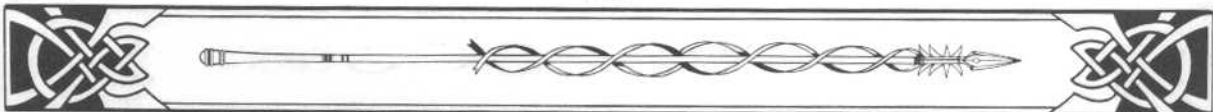
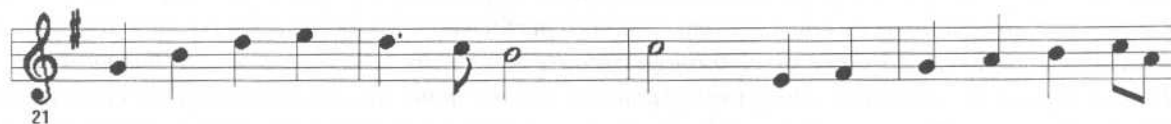
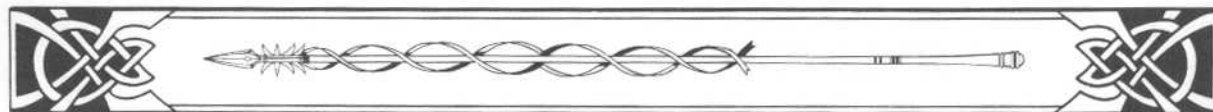
The first part, sung by those who do not whistle well or whistled by those who do not desire to sing, is a round of sixteen measures. The second voice enters with the initial melody after the first four measures. The two play follow-the-leader until the first repeat sign, where the first voice usually begins the round again.

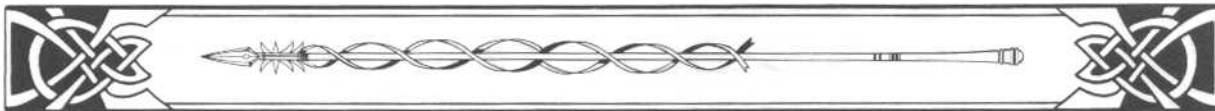
The next part comes in at Measure 17 and, as with the round, is repeated as many times as the kender wish. Octave echoes such as those in Measures 26 and 29 are repeated many times from opposite sides of the company as the march progresses. Often everything except the cadence and these echoes stops while the kender delight in answering one another in as many varied voices as they can devise. After they tire of this, the melody resumes from Measure 30. The empty measure at the end of the piece is intentional because this march essentially never ends. Kender only suspend it until the next time they take to the road. And, since kender are always taking to the road, this march is often heard.

Notes compiled by Mirrashar the Elven Bard

Kender Traditional/With Great Energy







Hail Takhisis

Gloria Dracona

In the year 372 AC, soon after Ian Stoutland left the Solamnic Knighthood in favor of the Knights of Takhisis, he expressed his devotion to his new faith in "Hail, Takhisis." It has since become known as the "Affirmation of Allegiance," lifting the spirit and renewing the dedication of Takhisis's followers whenever it is sung.

*Notes compiled by Jarrus Locastus
Aesthetic, Great Library of Palanthas*

The Affirmation of Allegiance

Ian Stoutland

1. Hail to the Queen of Dark - ness,

This system of musical notation is in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The melody is written in the treble clef, and the accompaniment is in the bass clef. The lyrics are '1. Hail to the Queen of Dark - ness,'. The music features a series of chords and single notes, with a final measure containing a whole note chord.

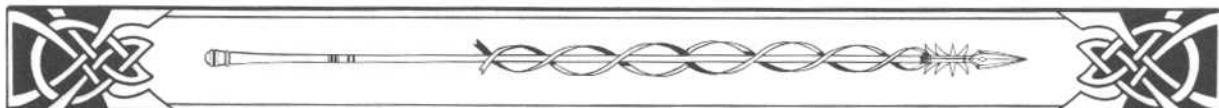
Maj - es - ty of the A - byss.

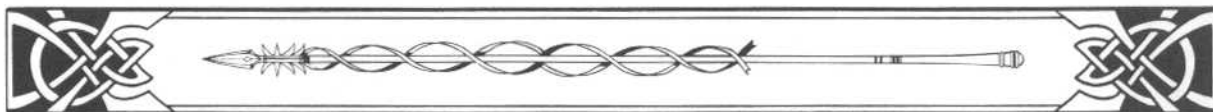
This system continues the melody and accompaniment. The lyrics are 'Maj - es - ty of the A - byss.'. The music features a series of chords and single notes, with a final measure containing a whole note chord.

Tenor Hail Tak - hi - sis, al - le - giance to thee

Hail Tak - hi - sis, hail Tak - hi - sis, al - le - giance to thee, Tak - hi - sis.

This system includes a tenor part, indicated by an arrow and the word 'Tenor'. The lyrics are 'Hail Tak - hi - sis, al - le - giance to thee' for the tenor and 'Hail Tak - hi - sis, hail Tak - hi - sis, al - le - giance to thee, Tak - hi - sis.' for the main part. The music features a series of chords and single notes, with a final measure containing a whole note chord.





Service to Thee

Augustus Todd, a cleric of Paladine, wrote a poem in the year 1175 PC called "The Crown, Sword, and Rose" and the prolific Solamnic composer Thomas Walton set it to music in the year 1141 PC. Along with "Rock of Whitestone," this hymn, "Service to Thee," is probably the most frequently performed music at Solamnic ceremonies.

Notes compiled by Jarrus Locastus
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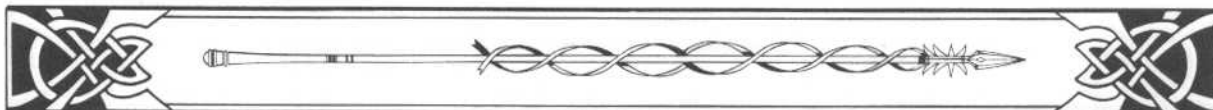
Traditional Solamnic Hymn

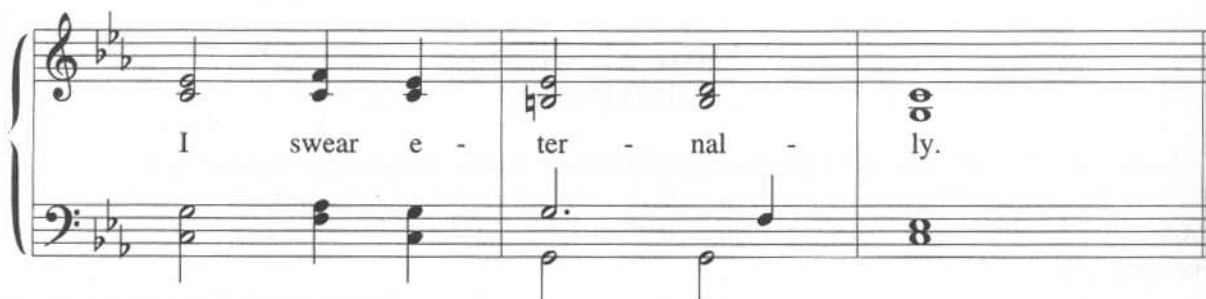
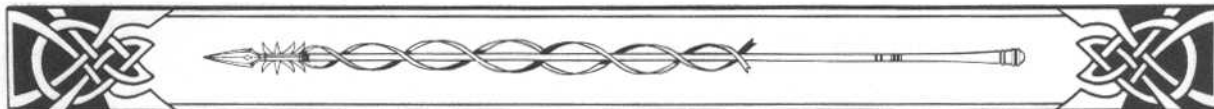
Words by Augustus Todd
Music by Thomas Walton

1. Ser - vice to thee, un - ques - tion - ing be, the Knights of the Crown val - ue
2. Pow - er to fight, e - vil to smite, the Knights of the Sword bat - tle
3. Hon - or to show, good deeds to sow, the Knights of the Rose help where

loy - al - ty. Faith - ful and true, in all that they do, the
day or night. Chal - leng - ing foes, re - gard - less of woes, pro -
'er they go. Self - less - ly give, right - eous - ly live, to

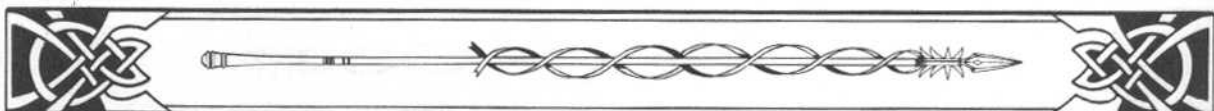
Oath and The Mea - sure de - fine. De - vo - ted to serve,
tect - ing what's right and de - vine. Cou - ra - geous - ly stay,
fol - low a high - er de - sign. No - ble and just, their

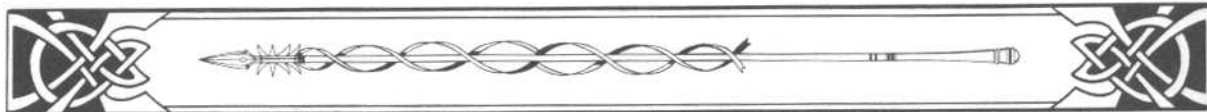




2. Hail to the Blood, Oath, and Code
Framing the Vision foretold.
Hail Takhisis, allegiance to thee
I swear eternally.

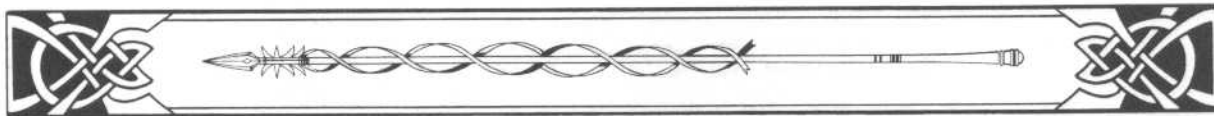
3. Hail to the Order of Knights:
Vigilance, fealty, and might.
Hail Takhisis, allegiance to thee
I swear eternally.





ne - ver to swerve, while aid - ing the breth - ren of Pal - a - dine.
ne - ver to stray, while fight - ing the bat - tles of Pal - a - dine.
lives they en - trust, to up - hold the stan - dards of Pal - a - dine.





Song of Goldmoon

(for soprano voice with piano accompaniment)

History tells us the original Song of Goldmoon was sung by Goldmoon under the direct guidance of the divine Paladine. However, this arrangement, with its rolling baseline accompaniment, was written by Llewella, a soprano in the Kalaman Chorus, who added the musical bridge to allow amateur vocalists a chance to catch their breath between verses.

Notes compiled by Jarrus Locastus,
Aesthetic, Great Library of Palanthas

Arranged by Llewella

Moderato, ma non troppo (♩ = 100–108)

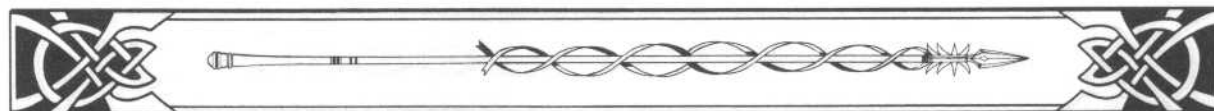
Piano

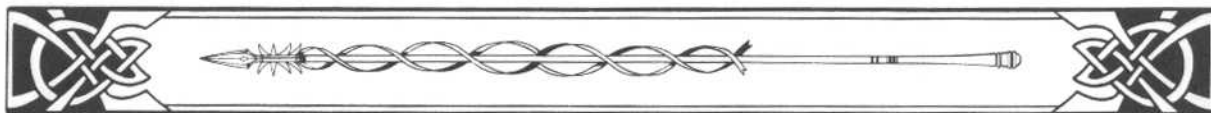
mf The

(use pedal where necessary to achieve legato)

1. Grass - lands are end - less. And the sum - mer sings on. And
2. Grass - lands are end wav - ing. The sky's - mer rim is gray. The

Gold chief - moon the prin - cess loves a poor man's son. Her
tain sends Riv - er wind east and a - way, to





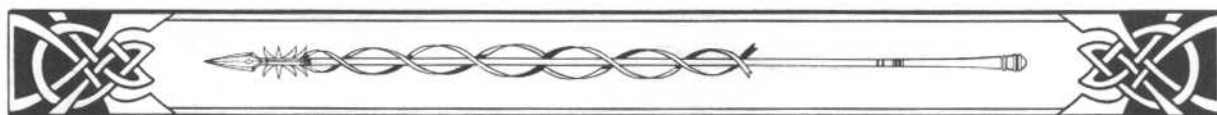
fa - ther the strong chief - tain makes long roads be - tween them: the
search for the strong ma - gic at lip of the morn - ing the

1.
grass - lands are end - less. And sum - mer sings on.
grass - lands are wav - ing. The sky's mer rim is on.

2. Chorus
2. gray. Oh Riv - er - wind where have you gone?

Oh Riv - er - wind au - tumn comes on.



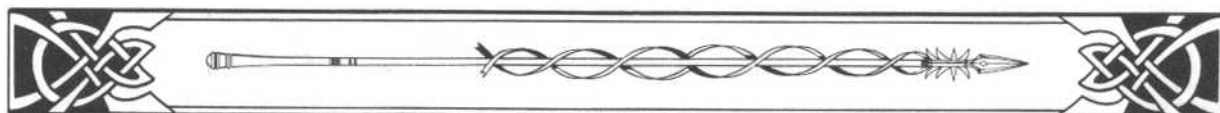


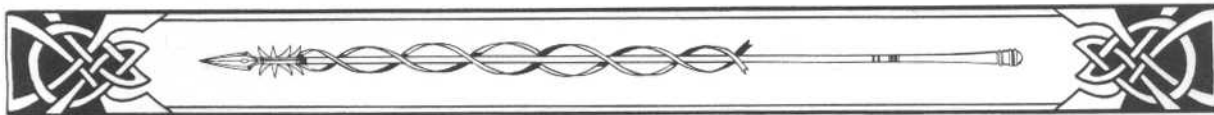
I sit by the ri - ver and look to the

sun - rise, but the sun ris - es o - ver the moun - tains a -

D. S. al Fine *Fine*
lone. au - tumn is here.

molto rit.
pp



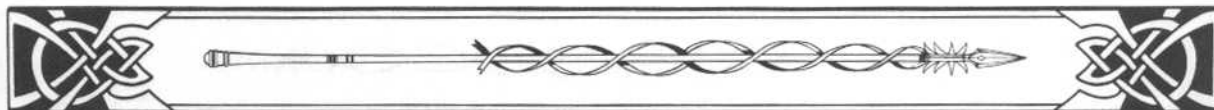


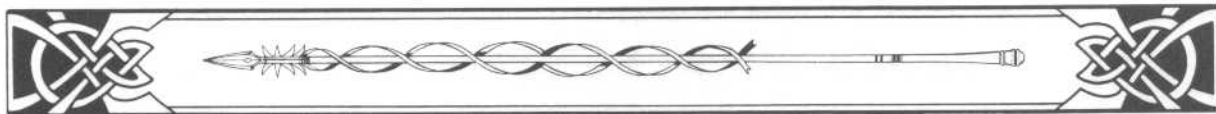
Sing verses 1, 2, and chorus, then sing verses 3, 4, 5, and chorus.

3. The grasslands are fading
 The summer wind dies,
He comes back, the darkness
 Of stones in his eyes.
He carries a blue staff
 As bright as a glacier:
The grasslands are fading,
 The summer winds die.

4. The grasslands are fragile,
 As yellow as flame,
The chieftain makes mockery
 Of Riverwind's claim.
He orders the people
 To stone the young warrior:
The grasslands are fragile,
 As yellow as flame.

5. The grasslands are faded,
 And autumn is here.
The girl joins her lover,
 The stones whistle near.
The staff flares in blue light
 And both of them vanish:
The grasslands have faded,
 And autumn is here.





Grand Procession

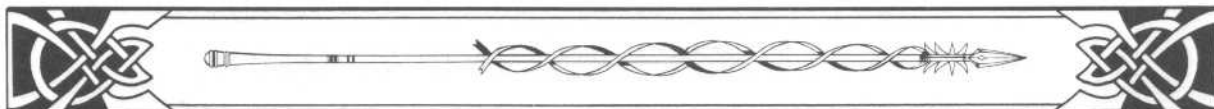
Frederic Francis Shallowford was born in a village six miles from Gwynned in Northern Ergoth. His father, a Knight of the Sword who had come from Solanthus, conducted a private school for the sons of the local nobility who wished to become knights. Though too young to partake in the knightly training himself, the little boy was fascinated by his father's school and often watched the knight recruits go through their military drills. Frederic's mother, meanwhile, encouraged him to study music and he advanced so rapidly that, at the age of nine years, he composed and played a concerto at a public recital. After the acclaimed concerto, his musical career seemed set in stone, and his knightly dreams were pushed aside—but never forgotten.

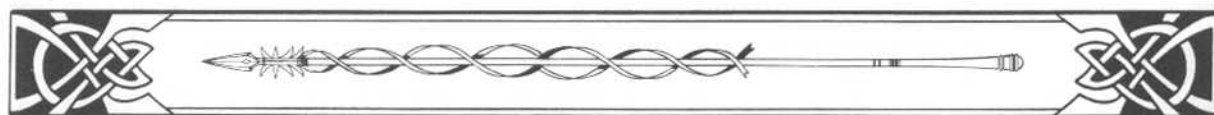
When he was twenty years old, Shallowford went to Palanthas to make his home. There, under the patronage of the Palanthian aristocracy, he originated a rather individual style of opera known as opera sortis that, with its grand military themes (and pantomimed battle scenes), earned him the nickname, "Knight of the Note." His greatest work, *The Games of Istar*, contains the march "Grand Procession," which accompanies the majestic entrance of the gladiators on stage as they prepare to do battle with one another.

Notes compiled by Jarrus Locastus
Aesthetic, Great Library of Palanthas

Majestic. March Tempo.

Frederic Francis Shallowford





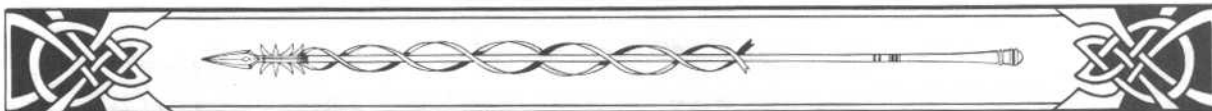
First system of musical notation. Treble and bass staves. Dynamics: *mf*. Triplet markings (3) are present in the bass staff.

Second system of musical notation. Treble and bass staves. Dynamics: *malto cresc.*. Triplet markings (3) are present in the bass staff.

Third system of musical notation. Treble and bass staves. Dynamics: *f cresc.*, *ff*. Triplet markings (3) are present in the bass staff.

Fourth system of musical notation. Treble and bass staves. Dynamics: *f cresc.*, *ff*. Triplet markings (3) are present in the bass staff.





Hush Baby, Sleep

The lullabies such as this that were sung by mothers during the time following the Cataclysm reflect their search for peace and calm during that turbulent period. The music is full of rare and sorrowful melody, rich, colorful, and warm as any folk tune. Though a traditional standard for many decades, "Hush Baby, Sleep" achieved a resurgence of popularity when rumors spread that it was sung by the ancient ancestors of famed Hero of the Lance, Riverwind, shortly after the Cataclysm. However, since historical records during that time were haphazardly kept, the actual composer of this song remains anonymous.

Notes compiled by Jarrus Locastus
Aesthetic, Great Library of Palanthas

Anonymous

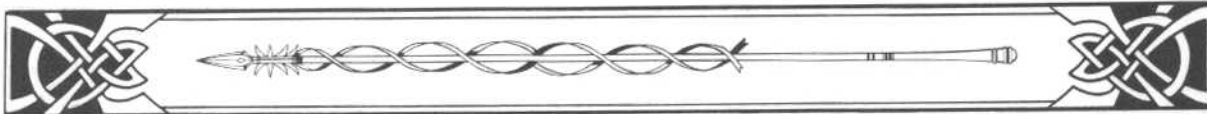
Andante

Hush ba-by, sleep ba-by, night-time is here and the
hush ba-by, sleep ba-by, don't stay a-wake, let your

Piano *p* (in the style of a harp)

moons cir-cle round up a-bove in the skies. The
dreams car-ry you to a world far a-way. A



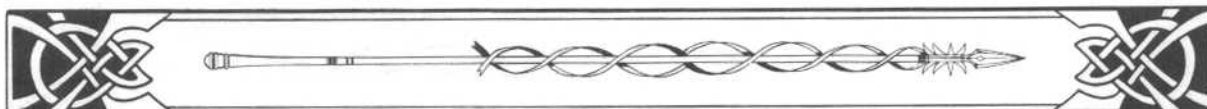


eve - ning is calm and the blan - ket is soft, time to
world that is peace - ful, a world filled with love, where all

1.
rest, time to sleep, close your eyes. _____ So
child - ren share laugh - ter and play. _____

2.
_____ So sleep till the dark fades a - way.

molto rit.



More Recipes from Tika's Cookbook



by Tika Waylan Majere

Proprietress

Inn of the Last Home



I begin with two dishes that Otik used to serve, and that have been enjoyed by many patrons over the years. Tasslehoff pleaded with me to put one of his recipes in, and, out of love and respect, I have added a recipe that Flint Fireforge once gave me, keeping it in his own words! Finally, I have included recipes that are representative of four very different Krynish cultures: the Palanthans with emphasis on haute cuisine, the Flotsamites who insist on hearty meals, the elves who eat light but well, and the gully dwarves with their dirt-simple cooking techniques. I add a word of caution to the gully dwarf recipes: substitute chicken for rat meat. Chicken tastes about the same and is much more healthful.

One of the kettles on the hearth at the Inn of the Last Home always contains Otik's savory Sweet n' Spicy Beans. Tasslehoff first became acquainted with the dish when he stumbled into the pot after being menaced by a disgruntled patron who accused him of fingering his pouch during dinner. Tas licked the splashes off his hands, liked the taste, and ordered a dish. The beans are usually ladled over a large piece of hot cornbread.

Otik's Sweet n' Spicy Beans
(Serves 4-5)

- ½ cup dry kidney beans
- ½ cup dry black-eyed peas
- ½ cup red wine
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 teaspoon dried parsley
- ½ small can jalapeño chilies, chopped fine
- ½ cup shredded cooked pork or turkey (optional)
- 1 tablespoon dark brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon maple syrup

- 3 pinches dried sage
- 1 teaspoon Tabasco or Louisiana Hot Sauce (more or less to taste)
- ½ cup chicken stock or water

Sort, wash, and drain beans and peas. Place beans and peas in 1-quart container, cover completely with water, and let them soak 8-24 hours.

Empty water, beans, and peas into medium-sized, heavy saucepan. Add wine and onion. Heat until almost boiling, then reduce heat and simmer. Add parsley, jalapeños, and sage. Simmer for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add brown sugar, maple syrup, then Tabasco or Hot Sauce. Stir in well.

Simmer another 30 minutes, until beans are soft, adding chicken stock or water as necessary to prevent scorching. Allow gravy to thicken if serving over cornbread. If desired, add cooked meat during last 10 minutes of simmering. Adjust seasonings and sweetenings to taste. Serve à la carte or as a meal over cornbread.



Another of Otik's staples, this cornbread can be cooked three ways: in an oven, in a Dutch oven on campfire coals, or in a skillet on top of the stove. Otik never put much sugar in this batter, figuring the cornbread would either be hidden by a ladle of Sweet n' Spicy Beans or drowned with plenty of butter and either honey or fruit preserves. Also excellent with Gully Dwarf Stew. Some claim this cornbread can be comforting after a person eats Fizban's Fireball Chili.

Otik's Cornbread

(Serves 6-8)

- 2 cups yellow cornmeal
- ½ cup flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1 egg, slightly beaten
- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1½ cup milk

Preheat oven to 375°F. Sift together dry ingredients. Add remaining ingredients, and stir well. Spoon batter into well-greased 8 x 8-inch baking pan. Bake 30-35 minutes until bread is golden brown and passes test for doneness—toothpick inserted in center should come away clean.

Alternatively: Cornbread dough can be baked in a heavy, covered, nonstick or well-seasoned skillet on a stovetop or over a campfire. Heat bread until top sets up enough to handle with fingers. Flip bread over and continue heating, covered, until bread tests for doneness with toothpick.

Cornbread can be baked over a campfire in a greased (or foil-lined) dutch oven. Cover dutch oven and set in coals. Set more coals on oven lid. Check occasionally for doneness, taking care to remove coals from lid before opening.

Serve hot with Sweet n' Spicy Beans poured over top, or plain with plenty of honey.



Tasslehoff's Marvelous Turkey Stew in a Flash

- First wander around town with Caramon to find new and interesting ingredients.
- Mix well with other customers at the shops.
- Add a couple of dashes out into the street with a shopkeeper chaser.
- Have shopkeeper shake all ingredients (and handler) vigorously until a small number ingredients separate out.
- Sprinkle in a few ruffians (well beaten).
- Follow Caramon back home to the Inn.
- Tell Tika about the trip through town (even if she's not listening).
- While still talking, closely examine Tika's curio cabinet.
- You should hear a sharp intake of air, a scream, then—right in your face is —Turkey Stew.

Or, if you don't have time to go through all this (or Tika's lying down on the bed with a cold cloth over her eyes), you can make this instead.



Kender Wild Rice Delight

(Serves 12-20)

- 1½ cups wild rice
- 1 cup apple juice
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup finely chopped onions
- 1½ cups finely chopped celery
- 12 ounces sliced fresh mushrooms
- 1 cup chopped chicken, duck, or turkey, or ½ pound ground turkey
- 2 cups water or poultry stock
- ½ cup orange or cranberry juice
- ½ teaspoon poultry seasoning (optional)
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon nutmeg
- ¼ teaspoon celery seed
- ¼ teaspoon ginger
- ¼ teaspoon cardamom
- ½ teaspoon Italian seasoning





- ¼ cup Worcestershire sauce
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 4 tablespoons cornstarch
- ½ cup cold water
- ½ cup sour cream

Wild rice will triple in volume. Prepare rice in large pot according to package directions but with 1 cup less water than instructions call for. Halfway through the rice's cooking time add apple juice. Should the rice require further liquid to keep from drying out during cooking, add more apple juice or water. In general 1½ cups rice requires 6 cups water and an hour to simmer. It is better to add liquid as needed than to add too much and have to drain some off, which will drain away the "goodness" of the rice. When the rice is done according to your preference—firm and nutty or soft and tender—drain off any remaining liquid.

While rice cooks, prepare sauce. In a large skillet sauté onions, celery, garlic, and mushrooms in olive oil. Keep skillet covered to retain moisture. Add poultry, heating until pink is gone. Add spices, 1 cup of water or stock, juice, and Worcestershire sauce. Simmer for 10 minutes. Add mushroom soup and another cup of water or stock. Simmer until heated through. In cup, mix cornstarch and cold water. Pour cornstarch mixture into sauce, stirring constantly. Let sauce simmer and thicken 2-5 minutes. Add sour cream and stir. Heat just long enough to warm sour cream, about 1 minute.

Divide rice onto serving dishes and pour sauce on top or serve family style with rice and sauce mixed together in a large bowl.



Flint's Bacon-Wrapped-Around-Water-Chestnuts

- 1 pound bacon
- 1 can of water chestnuts
- soy sauce
- chicken livers (optional)
- toothpicks

You take the bacon and wrap half a piece around a whole water chestnut, then secure with a sliver of wood. Make a whole bunch of these buggers. Caramon wraps raw chicken guts (liver) in, too, but that's pretty gross, if you ask me. Place on a flat pan. Pour that dark salty sauce (what's its name?) over them. Put under a flame. (Broil) Tricky stuff. Wait awhile. (10-15 minutes) If the smoke gets too thick, you've waited too long. Turn those buggers over and wait just a little longer. (5 to 10 on the other side) If you're not smoked out of your dwelling, then take them out and eat them. Of course, your tongue may get a little singed, but what's a few taste buds anyway?



A specialty of the Sleeping Goat Inn (one of the finest in Palanthas), which prides itself on making certain that its wealthy clients begin their day (no matter how late they lie abed) with a warm meal. WARNING! This is not included in the price of the room!

Late-Sleeper Casserole

(Serves 6)

- 2 cups plain croutons
- 1 cup (4 ounces) shredded cheddar cheese
- 4 eggs, slightly beaten
- 2 cups milk
- ½ teaspoon salt
- dash pepper
- ½ teaspoon dry mustard
- ½ teaspoon onion powder
- 4 slices bacon, cooked to a crisp

Preheat oven to 325°F. Combine croutons and cheese in greased 10 x 6 x 1 3/4 inch baking dish. In bowl combine eggs, milk, salt, pepper, mustard, and onion powder. Whisk together until blended. Pour egg mixture over croutons. Crumble cooked bacon over all. Bake for 55-60 minutes until eggs are set.



The most popular street vendors in the city of Palanthas are the famed "muffin hurlers." They are renowned not only for the delicious flavor of their muffins, but also for the fact that they "hurl" the muffins to their customers, who appear in their windows or stand at the doors to their shops to catch them.

Hurled Oatmeal Muffins

(yield: 1 dozen)

- 1 cup rolled oats
- 1 cup buttermilk or sweet milk soured with 2 tablespoons lemon juice and allowed to stand and curdle ten minutes
- ½ cup butter or margarine
- ½ cup dark brown sugar, packed
- 1 egg
- 1 cup flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon (optional)
- 1 cup raisins (optional)

Soak oats in milk 1 hour. Preheat oven to 400°F. Cream butter and sugar together. Beat in egg. Sift together flour, baking powder, soda, salt, and (if desired) cinnamon. Alternate stirring dry ingredients and milk and oatmeal into butter mixture. Add raisins (if desired). Spoon batter into lightly greased muffin tin. Bake 20-25 minutes.



This attractive and festive dish, served on elegant silver dishes during Yule celebrations at the palace of the Lord of Palanthas, tastes just as good (or better!) off crockery plates, and is suitable for an evening at home when the members of the Adventurers' Guild drop by.

Red, White, and Green Turkey

(Serves 2)

- 6 slices turkey breast (½ pound)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1½ cup chopped fresh spinach
- 6 thin slices mozzarella cheese (2-3 ounces)
- 1 large can peeled, crushed tomatoes (28 ounces)

Drain tomatoes. Heat tomatoes in saucepan. Heat olive oil in large skillet. Over medium heat sauté turkey breast slices in olive oil on both sides, until turkey is white through. Carefully cover each slice of turkey with spinach; then cover spinach with cheese. Turn skillet heat to low. Cover skillet. Wait 3-8 minutes for mozzarella to melt completely. Set turkey on warmed dinner platters. Drain tomatoes a second time and spoon over top of turkey. Salt and pepper to taste. Serve with fresh pasta.



Legend tells that this dish was once a favorite of the Kingpriest. It survives as a feast dish of the Silvanesti elves. Although the fruits contained within are not inexpensive, it is the saffron in the dressing that inflates the cost. Saffron, the stigma from the flower of the crocus sativa, is so delicate it must be gathered by hand. Each flower produces only two or three stigma that can be dried and stored for later use. Saffron, when damp, also stains whatever it comes in contact with a rich, orange-yellow color. One legend has it that some of the ladies of the court of the Kingpriest would sneak into the kitchens in the middle of the night and steal saffron to use to tint their hair. The Kingpriest ordered the spice cabinets locked and guarded at all times.





Royal Fruit with Saffron Dressing

(Serves 6-8)

- 3 stigma saffron
- 2 tablespoons nonfat vanilla yogurt
- 1 apple (Delicious or Granny Smith), cored and sliced—do not peel
- 2 oranges, peeled, seeded, and separated
- 1 tangerine, peeled, seeded, and separated
- 1 12-ounce can mandarin oranges, drained
- $\frac{1}{2}$ pound grapes (red, green, or black)
- 1 pear (Bosc or Asian), cored and sliced—do not peel
- $\frac{1}{2}$ pint blueberries (if available)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ pint raspberries, red or wild black (if available)
- seeds of 1 pomegranate (optional)
- 2 ripe kiwifruit, peeled and sliced

Carefully pulverize saffron using mortar and pestle or crush between wax paper squares with back of spoon. In small cup stir yogurt and saffron together. (Warning: Take care that no large pieces of saffron slip into yogurt mix. Saffron has a very strong flavor. It also stains anything a bright yellow when moist.)

Let dressing sit while washing, peeling, seeding, and cutting fruit into bite-size pieces. Stir together gently all fruit but the kiwi. Stir dressing a second time, then blend carefully into fruit salad. Garnish with kiwifruit slices.

Color diversity is an important aspect of this dish. If using a red apple, try to find green or black grapes. Conversely a green apple would require red and black grapes. Fresh blueberries or raspberries are considered the height of fashion.



This candy takes its name from its resemblance to the beautiful stained glass windows in the Great Temple at Istar. During Yule, children break the candy in memory of the Cataclysm, which destroyed the Kingpriest's temple.

Stained Glass Candy

- 1 cup sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup corn syrup
- $\frac{1}{8}$ cup water
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon flavoring (e.g. oil of cinnamon, oil of peppermint)
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon food coloring

Combine sugar, syrup, and water in heavy saucepan. Bring mixture to a boil, stirring constantly until all sugar is dissolved. Simmer solution until it reaches the hard-crack stage (290°F). To test temperature without a thermometer, spill a drop of solution into a glass of cool water. At the hard-crack stage, the sugar will form a ribbon that will be brittle when removed from the water. Remove sugar solution from heat. Stir in flavoring and food coloring. Pour into large, shallow, lightly oiled pan. When cool, cut or break into pieces.



Flotsamite grub is guaranteed to fill the stomachs of scheming, ambitious citizenry. While the citizens of Flotsam could never be called welcoming, their food, at least in the better inns, is as wholesome and nourishing as can be found throughout the land. The author must confess to a partiality to apple desserts and a lifelong quest to find the perfect sea chowder.

Flotsam Fish Chowder

(Serves 6)

- 2 cups water
- 2 pounds potatoes, peeled and cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch cubes
- 1 teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon dried basil
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon pepper
- 1 pound cod or haddock, fresh or frozen and partly thawed, cubed
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 3 tablespoons butter or margarine
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 2 cups milk
- 1 stalk celery, diced

- 1 can or frozen package corn (12-16 ounces) or the kernels from three ears of corn.
chopped parsley and/or pimento for garnish

Put water, potatoes, and salt in large soup kettle. Bring water to boil, then simmer just until potatoes are tender. Set fish cubes in kettle; add basil and pepper, and cover kettle. Simmer 15 minutes more, until fish flakes easily.

Meanwhile, sauté onion in butter in small saucepan. Whisk in flour, then add milk, stirring constantly. Bring milk mixture to boil, then simmer until it thickens slightly.

Add milk mixture, celery, and corn to kettle with potatoes and fish. Simmer until all ingredients are heated through, stirring occasionally.

Serve in bowls garnished with parsley, pimento, and chowder crackers.



Flotsam Pie

(Serves 8)

- 1 pound sweet Italian sausage
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 6 eggs
- 4 cups chopped fresh spinach
- 16 ounces mozzarella cheese, shredded
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup ricotta cheese
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon pepper
- pastry for 2-crust 9-inch pie
- 1 tablespoon water

Preheat oven to 375°F. Squeeze sausage from casing into heavy skillet. Break up and brown sausage; sauté garlic in sausage fat. Drain off fat. Reserving 1 egg yolk, mix remaining eggs in a bowl with sausage, garlic, and next five ingredients.

Prepare pastry crust. Roll a little more than half the dough into 11-inch circle and line 9-inch pie pan. Mound sausage mixture

in the center. Roll remaining dough into 10-inch circle and lay over top. Trim dough all around to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch from edge. Press two layers of dough together and flute edges so they stand. Make three long steam-slits in top of crust.

Beat remaining egg yolk and water together in small bowl. Brush top of pie. Reroll pastry scraps and cut into designs with knife or cutters. Fish, oak leaves, and runes are favored in Flotsam. Place designs on pie top. Brush with egg mixture. Bake pie for 60-75 minutes, until piecrust is golden brown. Let pie cool ten minutes before cutting into wedges and serving. Pie can be chilled uncovered, then kept for 2 days covered, and served cold.




Traveler's Apple Crisp

(Serves 6)

- 4 cups sliced, pared tart apples
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup orange or cranberry juice
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup brown sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon nutmeg
- 1 cup rolled oats
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup walnuts (optional)

Preheat oven to 375°F. Layer apples in a buttered 8 x 8-inch pan. Sprinkle with juice. In separate bowl sift together sugar, flour, and spices. Cut in butter until mixture resembles coarse meal. Stir in oats and walnuts (if desired). Sprinkle mixture over apples. Bake for 40-45 minutes until apples are tender and topping is crisp. Serve warm with cream.





Elven dishes to nourish the spirit as well as the body.

Qualinesti Waybread—Quith Paran

(serves 8-12)

- 3 cups flour (white or whole wheat)
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- ¼ cup butter or margarine
- 1 cup quith-pa (dried fruits such as raisins or chopped dried apricots)
- 4 teaspoons caraway seeds
- 1 cup buttermilk (or sweet milk, soured with 2 tablespoons lemon juice and allowed to stand for 10 minutes)
- 1 egg

Preheat oven to 350°F. Sift together first four ingredients. Cut in butter with pastry blender or fork until mixture resembles coarse meal. Stir in dried fruit and caraway seeds. In separate bowl mix milk and eggs, then stir wet ingredients into dry. Stir until dough holds together. Turn dough onto floured surface. Knead dough briefly just to ensure consistent mixing. Form dough into ball. Place dough on lightly greased baking sheet and flatten to 7-inch circle. Bake for 45-55 minutes until loaf is golden brown. Cool before cutting into wedge servings.



Silvanesti Noodles with Sweetened Nut Sauce

(serves 2-4)

- 1 cup cooked fettucini, either spinach, wheat, or mix (about 4 ounces dry)
- 1 tablespoon butter
- 1 tablespoon flour
- ½ cup milk
- 3 tablespoons honey
- ½ cup chopped walnuts
- ½ cup chopped almonds
- ½ cup shredded mozzarella cheese

Preheat oven to 350°F. Prepare fettucini according to package directions; drain. In a small saucepan melt butter; blend in flour with whisk. Add milk slowly, whisking constantly. With burner at medium heat bring mixture to a boil so it thickens. Turn heat to low; stir in honey and nuts; simmer sauce for 5-10 minutes. Mix sauce with fettucini. Layer into casserole dish or baking crock half the noodle and sauce mixture, then half the mozzarella, then the rest of the noodle and sauce mixture. Top with remaining mozzarella. Bake for 15 minutes or until cheese browns.



This spicy, warming, mahogany-colored tea was at one time served only during the elegant ritual Ceremonies of High Tea in Kagonesti. After it was served, the celebrants raised their cups and entered the First State of Meditation to more fully enjoy its pungent aroma. The recipe has since made its way throughout Krynn. Raistlin used this tea whenever he ran out of his regular brew since the ginger, cloves, and catnip make it very soothing to sore, raspy throats. WARNING: Contains catnip. Do not leave this tea unattended in the presence of felines. Such neglect will result in overturned mugs, spilled tea, and cats under the influence.

Kagonesti Ginger Tea

(6 ceremonial-teacup servings)

- 4 cups water
- 20 thin slices fresh ginger
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 3 cloves
- 1 star anise (optional)
- 4 large pinches dried catnip
- 1 scant palmful redhot candies

Put catnip up into a bouquet garni—a 5-inch square of unbleached muslin or several layers of cheesecloth tied up tight with a bit of cotton thread. Heat water to boiling in a pot (a nonmetallic pot made of enamel

would be best, but stainless steel will also do). Add ginger, cinnamon, cloves, and anise. Simmer for 15-20 minutes. The longer the simmer, the spicier the tea. Remove tea from heat. Add bouquet garni of catnip, steep for 2-5 minutes. Add redhot candies and stir until dissolved. Serve hot.



Kagonesti Potato & Cucumber Salad

(Serves 4)

- 2 pounds red potatoes, scrubbed, cut into 1½-inch cubes
- 1 cucumber, peeled and sliced
- 2 tablespoons rice wine vinegar
- ½ cup canola oil
- 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- ½ cup chopped fresh dill

Cook potatoes in boiling water just until tender. Drain. Toss potatoes and cucumbers together in large serving bowl. In small bowl whisk together remaining ingredients; pour over vegetables and blend in gently. Serve hot or cold.



Bupu's Cookbook

While all of Krynn holds these pitiable creatures in contempt, and much of their diet is disgusting to our palates, that does not mean gully dwarves are incapable of cooking or enjoying fine foods should they be so fortunate as to stumble across the ingredients. Indeed, the Highlords often employed gully dwarf slaves as cooks, amused by their expertise in what seemed to them so trivial a skill as cooking.

I was once quizzed by an Aesthetic about the menus prepared for the Highlords by the gully dwarves. "The foolish creatures don't seem to have a clue just how bad all that rich food can be for their human overlords," this learned man pointed out. I could not refrain from replying, "You don't seem to have a clue just how cunning an enslaved gully dwarf can be."

Bupu's Rat-Dipping Fondue

(Serves 4)

- 1 clove garlic, cut in half
- 1 cup dry white wine
- 2 cups (8 ounces) shredded smelly cheese (Gruyere)
- 2 cups (8 ounces) shredded other smelly cheese (Emmentaler or aged Swiss)
- Many dipping rats
- or (if preparing for other races)
- Many cubes of sourdough or Italian bread, pieces of apples and cauliflower, mushrooms, other firm vegetables

Bupu's Directions:

Melt cheese.

Dip rat.

Drink wine.

Take nap.

Other races: Rub the inside of a fondue pot with the cut garlic. Pour wine into pot over low heat and gradually add cheese until it is all melted. Keep over heat for 2 to 3 minutes, stirring constantly, until mixture is thick and smooth. Do not allow fondue to boil. Transfer pot to table, keeping warm over Sterno.

Bupu adds, "If not enough rats to go around, use other stuff to dip into pot, not counting Highbulp. Him get real mad."

I suggest sourdough bread, raw vegetables, and fruit.



Bupu says, "We once bossed 'round by real mean Tall. We fix him lots of these cookies. He liked cookies so much, he ate whole lot every day. One night, him grab chest, fall down dead on face. These our favorite cookies ever since."

I don't recommend a steady diet of these scrumptious, rich cookies, but they're great for occasional treats!





Killer Cookies

(yield: 6 dozen)

- 1 cup butter
- ½ cup (4 ounces) cream cheese
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 egg yolk
- ½ teaspoon vanilla
- 2½ cups flour
- food coloring
- cookie decorations (e.g. colored sugars)
- candied cherry (optional)

Cream together butter, cream cheese, and sugar. Beat in egg yolk and vanilla. Add food coloring if desired. Gradually add flour, stirring well. Scoop dough onto waxed paper, and press into disc. Wrap dough and chill at least 2 hours. (Dough will remain fresh refrigerated for 2 days).

Preheat oven to 300°F. Form chilled dough into small balls (smaller than walnuts). Set balls 1 inch apart on ungreased cookie sheets and flatten them with bottom of glass dipped in flour. Decorate cookies if desired. Bake 18-24 minutes. Cookies should not brown except on the bottom. Cool before serving.



Bupu says, "Highbulp like this 'cause him like to slurp noodles off plate."

Highbulp's Fish n' Slurp

(Serves 6)

- 2 handfuls (12 ounces) spaghetti
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 giant mushroom, chopped (12 ounces smaller fresh mushrooms)
- 1 big clam, chopped (6½-ounce can) with clam juice
- 1-2 cups chopped and cooked catch of the day—pollack or other available white fish or cooked crabmeat (optional)
- 1 teaspoon ginger
- 1 pinch of basil

- 1 pinch of thyme (optional)
- 1 tablespoon chopped parsley
- 2 tablespoons butter or margarine chopped into 8 small pieces
- 1-2 cups freshly grated Parmesan cheese

Prepare spaghetti according to package directions. While spaghetti is cooking prepare sauce. In a large skillet sauté garlic and mushrooms in olive oil. Add clams, clam juice, and catch of the day (if someone caught something that day). Add spices and parsley. Simmer ten minutes. Salt and pepper to taste.

Drain spaghetti. In large bowl mix spaghetti with butter, until butter is melted. Serve spaghetti with sauce poured on top and Parmesan sprinkled over all.



Bupu says, "Hard part 'bout this is catching squid. Best way is to tie rope 'round least favorite friend, toss friend in water, wait for squid. When squid grab friend, jump in water and grab squid."

Squid with Gully Sauce

(Serves 4)

- 1 pound fresh plum tomatoes, seeded and chopped
- ½ cup chopped parsley
- ½ cup olive oil
- 1 large shallot, minced
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons drained capers
- 1 pound squid
- ¼ cup flour
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon white pepper
- ¼ cup olive oil

Mix first six ingredients in a bowl. Mix flour, salt, and pepper in separate bowl. Dredge pieces of squid in flour. Heat olive oil in skillet. Fry squid in hot oil until white and slightly crispy. Serve with tomato sauce. (Excellent with white rice).

Ariakan's Notes





The Isle of the Brutes

An Excerpt from the History of the Knights of Takhisis
Written and compiled by Ariakan, son of Ariakus, Commander

Entry 103

It could be none other than my mother, Zeboim, goddess of the sea, who brought us to this island in the far reaches of the Courrain Ocean. Our charts, made by the minotaur, do not show land this far east of Ansalon. The storm that blew us off course has finally subsided after thirty-three days of furious rain and gale-force winds. Today was the first day of sun and calm since we viewed the shores of Ansalon.

The island is very large, and we have not yet begun to search it. My flagship, the corsair *Dominator*, is badly damaged from the force of the sustained winds, and the crew works around the clock to repair holes and make her seaworthy. But I shall not set sail until I have explored this isle. Zeboim, or perhaps the Dark Queen herself, has brought me here for a reason, and I intend to know what it is.

Entry 104

My First Aide awoke me at daybreak, half an hour before my normal rising time. He knew he would awake my ire as well as my mind, but he had reasons, as I found out when I achieved the forecastle. On shore, no more than five hundred arm's lengths from my ship, were hundreds of men. They were lined up in perfect rows and columns, standing and facing the ship. None of them made any movement or noise. It reminded me of when I reviewed the Fourth Dragonarmy back in Ansalon—they behaved with the discipline of seasoned troops, yet these people were obviously barbarians.

They wore no clothes that could be discerned from this range; their skin was painted blue. Each man carried a spear and some sort of short sword in a sheath on a leather belt. The barbarians in the front row held kite shields, and longer swords. I assume that these are the officers of the mob—no, mob is not the correct word to describe them. The barbarians have stood from sunup to this moment (just after our high-noon meal) in perfect ranks, watching, staring. I cannot . . .

Entry 105

It has been some time since I have written an entry into my field memoirs. My last entry was interrupted by shouts calling me to the deck. I could sense the men's tension. Before leaving my cabin, I strapped on the Great Sword of Drakmattha, passed down from my long-dead father, and my massive Skull Helm. I dared not take the time—nor the risk—of strapping on heavy armor. Not while still at sea.

True to form, my Command Staff and crew were not wrong in alerting me. The barbarians were now three quarters of the way to the ship—swimming! They swam as if taught by the very fish that inhabit these reaches. I have never seen anything like it. They still carried their spears with them!

The first wave stopped and floated around the ship. My bodyguard of six knights stood with longbows drawn. Suddenly, and without warning, the knights fired and began to reload. My first instinct was to stop them—no one attacks under my command without my order. Before I could act, however, all six knights dropped, as did half of my crew, with several

spears each impaled through their bodies.

The barbarians scrambled up the side of the ship—a feat which I would not have believed possible without ropes or nets—and dropped onto the deck like water washing over the side. Drakmattha, my sword, washed blue and red as I slew many barbarians.

The group attacking me had me pinned back against the foremast, but my superior swordsmanship allowed them to get no farther. I was about to toss aside my helm as it was impeding my ability to fight, what with the sweat pouring down into my eyes, when the mass of blue warriors suddenly pulled back. Sensing a ploy or, worse, an arrow or spear attack, I crouched in a fighting stance. My brief glances around suggested to me that I was the only person left alive on this ship. I was at their mercy.

Yet they did not kill me. One great behemoth of a man—standing well over seven feet tall, his skin painted bluer than the naked blue warriors around him—stepped forward from the throng that just moments ago was intent on killing me. He took just one step forward and knelt before me, offering me his long sword, hilt-first, with his head bowed.

Not knowing what else to do, acting on my instincts, I accepted the sword, turned the weapon around, and handed it back to the huge warrior. He stood, grinning ear-to-ear, then he took the sword, and turned back to his warriors. He yelled something in a strange, guttural tongue, and the warriors began to cheer.

Entry 106

I have now moved to what I believe to be the capital city of this civilization. At first, I would have called this a barbarian tribe, but my respect for these people has grown immeasurably. This city must number near one hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants. The culture seems rich, and there is much color in the architecture. I cannot speak their language, and they do not seem to want to try to speak mine. Their leader, or emperor, is probably the father of the warrior who presented his sword to me. I can only guess, but I believe that the helm and sword that I wield, along with my superior warrior skills, have shown me to be someone of value to them.

I found that they did not kill all my staff and crew. Only eleven remain—three from my staff, all of very junior rank, and eight crewmen. One of the crew was the second mate, and he is keeping the crew under control. We are being housed in the Emperor's Palace, a formidable stone structure. The land here is sun-baked and green. Rolling hills and grass end a mile or so past the city gates, and the jungle begins.

I say we are "housed" instead of held prisoner, as we do not seem to be prisoners here. I am accompanied by two of the blue-painted warriors wherever I go, but they do not hinder nor restrict where I go or what I do. We are fed at sunset and sundown, and the food is excellent.

Entry 107

My three staff officers have rejoined me. They now share the room next to mine. Jakja, the most senior, I have elevated to Talon Leader. He has begun to try to learn the language of these warriors. I, too, am beginning to catch certain words and phrases. I have only been here ten days, and am beginning to feel less alien.

Entry 108

I was taken to a great amphitheater today to behold the warriors' games. These games were bloody, much as I have witnessed in the famous minotaur Circus. At the end of the games, I was brought before the Emperor. As he was speaking to me (I did not understand





what he said), a huge warrior armed with a bronze helmet and long sword entered the ring. The Emperor motioned, and my helm and sword were presented to me.

Obviously, they wished me to perform.

I shook my head and indicated my intention not to fight. The crowd in the amphitheater began to howl with dissatisfaction. I beckoned for Talon Leader Jakja to step forward. I took the sword, but not the helm, presented it to him, and gestured for him to take my place in the ring. The Emperor nodded in pleasure, understanding by this action that I am an emperor in my own right.

The fight was a long and grueling match. Twice Jakja was slashed across the side and bled profusely. In the end, though, Jakja was triumphant, slaying the brute with a huge side stroke—the magic of the sword combining with the strength of the audacious move to nearly slice the blue warrior in two. The crowd roared with pleasure. The Emperor was very pleased.

Entry 109

It has been four days since I have written in this field memoir. Each of the past four days has seen us at the amphitheater. Emperor Kankaweah, for I have now learned his name, has invited us. Each day the number of warriors fighting one another to the death has increased. Today, they matched talon-sized units against one another. The winners were the survivors from one side. All those on the other side were dead.

This sort of fanaticism and this amount of military training should be going to much better use. Were these warriors mine to command, the dwarves, elves, and humans of Ansalon—especially the Knights of Solamnia—would have much to contend with. Mix these troops with my own Knights, as the backbone of the armies, and victory would be assured. Still, they are not mine to command—but there is merit to this idea.

Entry 110

Jakja has gained a grasp of the language. He is teaching me; we learn more and more each day. I am sure that my vocabulary and verb structure sound much as gully dwarf speech does to my ears, but we can finally communicate, if only in a rudimentary form.

I have learned that the island, as I assumed it was, is in reality a small continent. There were three cultures here until just recently. The Tarmak (the culture that we are with now) are a very militarily oriented people. They have made war on the Damjatt and the Keena for generations upon generations. A century ago, the Tarmak defeated the Keena and destroyed their entire military structure. The rest of the society was disassembled and assimilated into the Tarmak culture.

The Tarmak then turned their attention to the Damjatt, and sometime in the recent past (perhaps only a year or so ago), they utterly defeated the Damjatt and have put to the sword and spear all of the Damjatt leadership and military. The remainder of those people also are beginning to assimilate into the Tarmak culture.

The Tarmak military now have no enemies to wage war against. They have won all of the battles and have no one left to fight. They have no need even for much of a defensive military, as there is no one else on the continent. Revolution and internal strife seem to be foreign concepts here in the Tarmak society.

I must learn more, but it seems that the Tarmak are looking for a war. Their men are restless and unhappy. Blood feuds abound and threaten to disrupt the stability of the government. They do not know how to run a society without a conflict on which to focus.

Entry 111

A religious-looking person came to me today, bearing with her an ancient text. From what little I could glean from her speaking (for I learned nothing from her tome—it will take years to learn their written structures, as they look very complex), I believe I have learned why we were not killed outright.

The Tarmak have very little written history, but the Keena religious order did once describe a time when the fighting would cease, and the Warrior Cleric would come to them. They would learn of the Warrior Cleric's ancestral home, a place where Chaos reigned. The Warrior Cleric was to lead the Keena to battle in a holy war so as to cleanse this new land. The peoples of this new land would subjugate themselves to their new overlords, and peace would last for a millennia.

The text refers to this Warrior Cleric, Amarrel they call him, coming not from within their culture, but from another, distant land. His only characteristic, as far as the person told me, is that he would be short and wield a magical sword, enabling him to smite down even the greatest of the Keena warriors.

This fits well into my plans. I must now fulfill this prophecy and convince the Tarmak that the Keena prophecy is indeed valid.

Entry 112

I have spoken with Emperor Kankaweah and have asserted to him that I am "Amarrel," which I have claimed is the same as Ariakan in my language. I am here to lead the Tarmak in a great conquest of a foreign land—a rich land, but one that is divided between rival factions. It seemed as if the Emperor did not understand my reference, as he stared blankly at me for several moments.

He motioned for a servant, and instructed him in a whisper. The servant left and returned a minute later with the Tarmak religious figure. After some minutes of discourse between the two, the religious figure left. With a smile, the Emperor nodded.

Entry 113

Yesterday I came the closest to death of any time in my entire life, including the fall of the Temple of Neraka.

I was awakened before daybreak and taken to the amphitheater. Stripped of my clothing, I was smeared with the blue paint that the warriors of this culture wear in battle.

The tingle of the paint as it dried suggested to me that it has some minor magical property which may aid in defense. Although not necessarily significant if fighting one-to-one, the painted armor would certainly make a difference against large numbers of troops in mass combat.

Allowed to wear only my sword and sheath, I was taken to the center of the fighting field. In front of me stood three warriors, none less than half-a-height taller than myself. As the sun broke over the walls of the amphitheater, I saw that the stands were empty, save for the royal box, wherein sat the Emperor, his son, and his entourage. The Emperor rose and bowed to us.

I turned to bow back, but my attention was shifted by the three other warriors drawing their swords. I did likewise and the battle was on.

The first closed on my front and the other two began to circle to my rear, surrounding me. I recognized the tactic and decided that my only chance was to reduce the odds against me. I launched my attack at the warrior in front with such ferocity that he had to take several steps back. The other two were caught off guard, their reactionary blows missing me as I rushed





forward to press the advantage.

The warrior to the front lifted his huge weapon above his head. I raised my own sword in defense. My foot struck the big man's knee, bringing the large man crashing to the ground. By the time he hit dirt, his belly was split by my sword Drakmattha.

As my sword arm followed through, I twisted, but not fast enough. The warrior to my right rear caught me with his blade, slashing open my side. Blood washed down my torso. I fell to the ground and rolled over the dying first warrior, putting his body between me and my two remaining foes.

The third took a gamble and launched his sword at me from the left, actually throwing it, and with considerable skill. As I struggled to regain my feet, his sword sliced across my left arm—the arm I was using to gain leverage—dropping me back and leaving me vulnerable.

By this time, the second warrior had moved around the body of the first warrior and swung his sword in a lazy arc designed to cleave my head in two. These warriors seem to have a flair for the dramatic, with great swings with their swords, and flourishes and the like, probably because they are accustomed to pleasing a crowd. Had he just lunged and stabbed, I would not be writing this entry. His languid swing fell short as I grappled his legs with mine and brought him down. My sword came around and pierced the man's chest.

My attention was so focused on the second warrior that I could not prevent the third from recovering his sword, which he had thrown at me. Why he did not grab the closer sword of his first fallen comrade is beyond me. Perhaps it is a point of honor.

I regained my feet barely in time to sidestep a lunge from this brute of a man. He was completely unharmed and healthy, while I bled from two serious wounds. I parried two or three more blows, and circled around him. Finally, I had him turned so that his back was to his two fallen comrades. I attacked. Short stroke was followed by long lunge, neither connecting, but forcing the huge man backward.

Pressing, I lunged again, but my aim was off, my injury causing my muscles to give out on me. My opponent dodged, but he tripped over the second warrior, who was lying on the dirt floor. My foe fought to regain his balance, but in the split second of his disorientation, I swung my sword in a side arc. It hit my opponent's sword, slid down the blade and bit deeply into his leg. He fell, dropping his weapon.

Unknown to me, dropping a weapon is a sign of conceding victory to an opponent in this combat. As I stood to give the finishing blow, the shouts from the royal box caused me to pull back and look. They were waving me off. Looking back to my solitary opponent, I saw that he lay motionless, as if mortally wounded. I left him there and hobbled to the royal box.

I glanced down at the wounds that I had received. To my astonishment, I saw that they were already closing and looked as if they were cleansed. Perhaps this is one of the magical properties of the blue paint. We must analyze this for use by the Knights of Takhisis.

The Emperor came and met me on the floor of the amphitheater in front of the royal box. I feared that if I knelt to offer my sword to him that I would fall, my exhaustion almost overcoming me. Instead, he knelt before me and pronounced me Amarrel. I am their Warrior Cleric.

The warriors of the Tarmak are mine to train and command for the conquest of Ansalon.

Fizban & Me

An Affidavit by Tracy Hickman

"Will you please leave me alone! Can't you see I'm trying to get some work done?"

Contrary to popular myth, I am normally a fairly even-tempered person. I genuinely like people and give visitors to my home every ounce of civility that I have to offer.

But this guest—this is just too much! He has been hanging about my office, off and on, for over ten years now.

"Leave you alone! Why, you doorknob, of course I'll leave you alone!"

The old man in the mouse-colored robes stands directly behind me, where I'm sitting at my roll-top desk, working (trying to work) on my beloved Power Book. I can feel the tickle of his long white beard brushing the back of my neck. His staff thumps the floor.

"I'll go—just as soon as I've found my hat! What have you done with it?"

I sigh. The hat is, of course, on the top of Fizban's head. It always is. I have often wondered if the old wizard sleeps in that hat. I suspect he does—just to annoy me. The saying goes that guests and fish both start to smell after three days. I've been thinking of slipping this fellow a herring in one of his pockets, just so that he'll get the idea.

"Look, Old One," I say, turning. "It's been fun and wonderful and, yes, you have taken care of my family and me over all these years. I am grateful; but I have other places to go and new people to see now. This contract has to be studied. There's the deal with the marketing group that has to be finished. I've got business meetings in Texas and that trip out to Paramount. I've just barely gotten my accounting straightened out. All of that on top of the science fiction novels I've got to write! And your blasted hat is on top of your blasted head."

The wizard frowns. "I thought you were finished with that book."

I counsel patience.

"I did finish *that* book and I have hopes that it will actually see print one day. It's the other book—oh, never mind!"

You'd think I'd get used to this guy. It's not as if we haven't had this conversation before. He appears hurt; his beard is quivering. I try to be polite.

"I'm working on a new one now, sir, and—"

"Ah! Then I'm sure you've written me into it! I am rather versatile, you know!" Fizban leaps up on my couch (I am terrified he will fall and break something, probably my plastic model of the "Enterprise"). He strikes a dramatic pose, waving his staff. His voice quivers





with thespian depth. "Damn the torpedoes! Charlton Heston ahead! The play's the thing!" He pauses. "Ah, say—you wouldn't happen to know what 'thing' the play is, do you?"

"No, Fizban! I don't know what 'thing' the play is and no, you do not appear in my new book!"

"You mean I'm not in your book?" Fizban is still bobbing and weaving among the sofa cushions.

"That's what I said . . . I think." After a conversation with Fizban, I tend to lose track.

He is now uneasy. "You've put me in it as someone else! A clever disguise. Glasses and a fake nose. A *nom de plume*. 'Trust your feelings, Fluke' and calling people 'Grasshopper' and that sort of thing."

"No," I say firmly. "You do not appear in this book in any form whatsoever."

The point on Fizban's hat droops slightly; his eyebrows meet above his beaky nose. He steps carefully and with injured dignity off the couch, gets tangled in his robes, trips, and stumbles halfway across the room before righting himself against my gaming table. Giving me a look which says he meant to do that, he turns his back icily on me and proceeds to stalk over to the bookcase where he begins examining my collection of old science-fiction titles—he knows better than to play with my kaleidoscopes after that last disaster. . . . But that's another story.

Seeing that he is, hopefully, entertained, I quietly turn and face my little computer, trying again to immerse myself in the text of a different time and place. The deadline hourglass is dropping its sands down the back of my mind.

"You know," Fizban says wistfully, just loud enough for me to hear, "Margaret would put me in *her* book!"

X mv,;wjfhqp

My hands fall on the keyboard in despair. I make a feeble attempt to explain.

"Fizban—you just don't understand. I'm working very hard to create an interactive television series. Margaret and I have been working on this project for the last five years. I've put time and money into it and we're just now beginning to see some daylight on the project. And it's not just that, either. You know that I'm a confirmed Trekker from the old days. I've got a shot at writing some Star Trek scripts. I owe four books to publishers now, plus the books Margaret and I are doing together. Then there's family to consider. My daughter just started driving. Do you know how old that makes me feel? There's family vacations and home evenings and church and conventions. I've got so much to do . . ."

"Bah! So much to do!" Fizban crosses the room. His staff lashes out with unbelievable speed for one so old. He bangs the staff repeatedly against the back of my chair. "Don't think I don't know what you're up to, Tracy Hickman! You love it! You love being involved in everything and juggling schedules and work. You just can't stand not having your fingers in every pie right up to your elbows. Most of all you love to create. Don't look at me that way, you doorknob! You know I'm right! I know everything! Remember, boy, I'm omnipotent!"

"Omniscient."

"What?"

"You're omniscient—that means 'all-seeing.' Omnipotent means 'all-powerful.' "

"And don't you forget it!" Fizban shouts. His staff thumps triumphantly on the floor.

I give up. I lay my head down on the Power Book. And then I feel his warm, gentle hand resting on my shoulder.

"Look, my boy, I understand what you're going through. You and that Weis woman have lived through a lot these years we've been together. Your own lives haven't been without trial, pain, sorrow, and hardship. Some days, I know, it's difficult to get up in the morning and create something. Believe me, I understand. Try godhood sometime! You make up the fantasy," he added, pounding himself repeatedly on the chest, "but guess who gets stuck with carrying it all out!"

The old man sighs. "How do you think I felt, watching Sturm Brightblade die? I could have spared him, yes, but thousands of innocents would have died in consequence. Do you think that was an easy decision?"

I lean back in my chair and look over the top of my desk. The original of Elmore's *Heroes of the Lance* painting hangs there. Tanis, Raistlin, Caramon, Goldmoon and Riverwind, Laurana, Tika, Flint, Tasslehoff—they're all gathered around the campfire. They beckon me to join them. Their voices call warmly to me in greeting.

"Yes, I guess Margaret and I've put you through quite a lot," I admit.

I reach up and put my own hand on his. The skin of the back of his hand is surprisingly soft. "I've been too harsh on you, old friend. Through all the years and all the trials—and even in the very face of death itself—you have always been there for me. How could I have been so thoughtless as to forget?"

I look again into the old man's eyes. Through the wrinkles and years, those orbs still shine as brilliantly as they did on the day we first met. There is something of the look of the kender in those eyes: the longing for the excitement of the unknown that lies just another step ahead on the trail or around another bend in the mountain path. His body is frail and withered, his hands gnarled and stiff, but the mind behind those eyes is filled with youth and sunlight and hope. Rarely can I look into those eyes and not see the joy of creation and the warmth of old friends who have helped me along this path in days gone by,





as well as those whom I have yet to meet.

"Very well, Fizban, I suppose you'd like us to write yet another Dragonlance story . . ."

"You betcha! One in which I figure quite prominently."

"Just give me a moment to finish reading this contract and I'll . . ."

"Contract? Oh, I know all about contracts. *E pluribus unum, adeste fideles, caveat interruptus*. Be glad to give you a hand with that, m'boy." Fizban rolls up his sleeves. "I happen to know a wonderful spell that straightens out any contract. Let's see. What was that now? Filterbell? Fickle knell? Fairy flop? I'll have it in a minute. . . ."

I've heard this spell before. I jump from my chair, waving my arms frantically in his face to get his attention. "No, Fizban! No spell! I just had the room repainted and the ceiling fixed from last time! Never mind the contract! I'll . . . I'll look at it later."

"What about that book you're writing?" Fizban's eyes narrowed. "The one that I am most definitely NOT in?"

"It can wait a bit longer, too." I sit back down. "Now; for the story . . ."

The wizard throws himself down on my couch, his booted feet cross under the fabric of his robes. He puts his hands behind his head. The motion pushes the hat forward over his eyes—as it has so many times before.

He jerks up in alarm. "Struck blind, by god!"

"No, no." I remove the hat, return to my seat, put my own feet up on my desk, and lean back in my chair, still gazing at Fizban. How can I ever explain to anyone that I am driven by this crafty old man, who lives as a shadow behind me? You're right, wizard. Creation in either gods or mortals is the stuff of purest joy.

"Tell me the tale, boy," he orders from beneath the brim of his crumpled hat.

"In the days after the War of the Lance . . ."

"And," Fizban interrupts, as always he does, "make it a good one this time."

I smile. For you, Fizban—and for all those who keep you in their hearts—I will try my best to "make it a good one."

Here we go again!

The DRAGONLANCE® Saga

**A Legend
in the Making**



1984

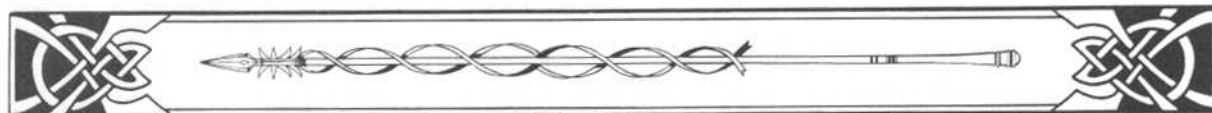
<i>Dragons of Autumn Twilight</i>	Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman	Chronicles Volume 1	The first DRAGONLANCE Novel is now in its 28th printing!
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1985

<i>Dragons of Winter Night</i>	Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman	Chronicles Volume 2	All Chronicles volumes feature poetry by Michael Williams and art by Larry Elmore.
<i>Dragons of Spring Dawning</i>	Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman	Chronicles Volume 3	Over 12 million copies sold in the English-language edition alone. Collector's hardcover edition of Chronicles was published in 1987.

1986

<i>Time of the Twins</i>	Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman	Legends Volume 1	DRAGONLANCE books are published in 12 foreign languages, including Spanish, Hungarian, Finnish, Swedish, Japanese, Hebrew, Danish, Portugese, Italian, German, Polish, and French.
<i>War of the Twins</i>	Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman	Legends Volume 2	Members of the original DRAGONLANCE design team were Harold Johnson, Laura Hickman, Douglas Niles, Jeff Grubb, Michael Dobson, Michael Breault, Bruce Heard, and Roger E. Moore.
<i>Test of the Twins</i>	Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman	Legends Volume 3	First of the DRAGONLANCE books to achieve status as a <i>New York Times</i> Top Ten bestseller. Collector's edition of Legends published in 1989.

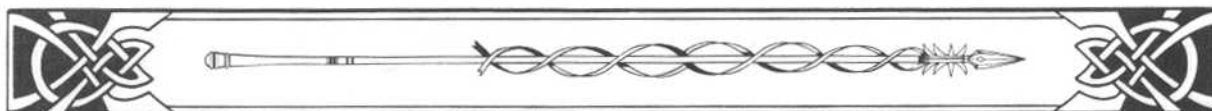


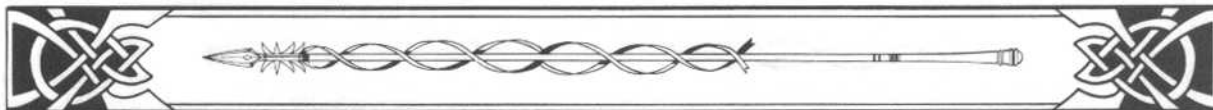
1987

<i>The Magic of Krynn</i>	Anthology	Tales Volume 1	First volume of collected short stories by TSR authors. Highlight: The novella-length "The Legacy" by Weis and Hickman about a young mage confronting the ghost of Raistlin.
<i>Kender, Gully Dwarves, and Gnomes</i>	Anthology	Tales Volume 2	Highlight: The novella "Wanna Bet?" by Weis and Hickman about the quest for the Graygem.
<i>Love and War</i>	Anthology	Tales Volume 3	Highlight: The novella "Raistlin's Daughter."
<i>Leaves from the Inn of the Last Home</i>	Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman (Ed.)	The Complete Krynn Sourcebook	DRAGONLANCE legends, poems, songs, and recipes. Reprinted by popular demand in 1994.
<i>Art of the DRAGONLANCE Saga</i>	Mary Kirchoff (Ed.)	Art Book	Paintings and illustrations, many in color, documenting the visual development of the world of Krynn.
<i>Atlas of the DRAGONLANCE World</i>	Karen Wynn Fonstad	Atlas of Krynn	Maps of the world, along with interesting features about important locations and their histories.

1988

<i>The Legend of Huma</i>	Richard A. Knaak	Heroes Volume 1	First DRAGONLANCE novel by a TSR author other than Weis and Hickman. Also a <i>New York Times</i> bestseller.
<i>Stormblade</i>	Nancy Varian Berberick	Heroes Volume 2	The tale of a secretly crafted Kingsword destined to break a deadlock among the ruling dwarven Thanes. German title is <i>Helden-Blut</i> .
<i>Weasel's Luck</i>	Michael Williams	Heroes Volume 3	First novel by the poet of DRAGONLANCE, whose alter ego is Quivalen Sath, the elven bard.



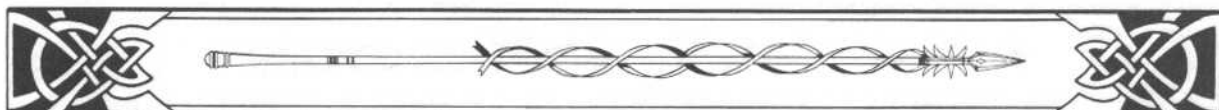


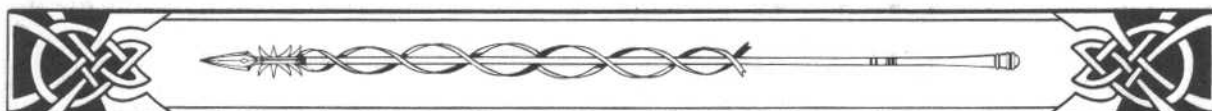
1989

<i>Darkness and Light</i>	Paul B. Thompson and Tonya R. Carter	Preludes Volume 1	Sturm and Kitiara hitch a ride on a gnome ship to Lunitari.
<i>Kendermore</i>	Mary Kirchoff	Preludes Volume 2	Tasslehoff betrothed, Uncle Trapspringer imprisoned. Welcome to the land of kender.
<i>Brothers Majere</i>	Kevin Stein	Preludes Volume 3	Caramon and Raistlin in the five years before the Chronicles.

1990

<i>Riverwind, the Plainsman</i>	Paul B. Thompson and Tonya R. Carter	Preludes II Volume 1	The quest for the magical blue crystal staff. The land of the Plains-people. In Italian: <i>L'Ordalia di Riverwind</i> .
<i>Flint, the King</i>	Mary Kirchoff and Douglas Niles	Preludes II Volume 2	Flint is crowned king of the gully dwarves and almost gets married. Coauthor Douglas Niles sometimes plays Flint at gaming conventions.
<i>Tanis, the Shadow Years</i>	Barbara and Scott Siegel	Preludes II Volume 3	Tanis's secret journey into his own dark past. In Spanish: <i>Tanis El Semielfo</i> .
<i>Kaz, the Minotaur</i>	Richard A. Knaak	Heroes II Volume 1	An informal continuation of the bestselling <i>Legend of Huma</i> , featuring Huma's stalwart minotaur companion.
<i>The Gates of Thorbardin</i>	Dan Parkinson	Heroes II Volume 2	The magical helm of Grallen, if found, will reward and curse the dwarven kingdom. An unofficial sequel to <i>Stormblade</i> .
<i>Galen Beknighted</i>	Michael Williams	Heroes II Volume 3	Return of the picaresque Weasel, reluctant knight and inadvertent hero.



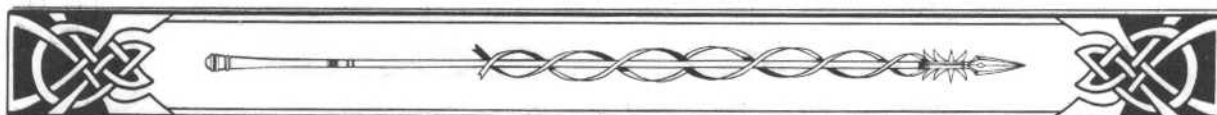


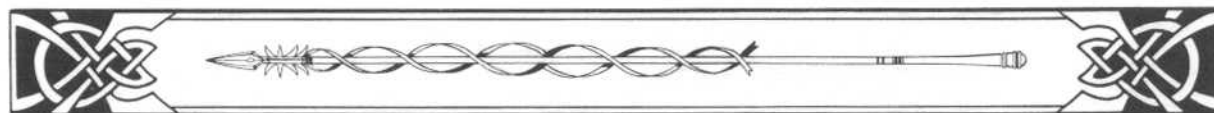
1991

<i>Firstborn</i>	Paul B. Thompson and Tonya R. Carter	Elven Nations Volume 1	Twin sons, rival factions, politics, and war in the elven kingdom.
<i>The Kinslayer Wars</i>	Douglas Niles	Elven Nations Volume 2	Kith-Kanan and his followers are forced into tragic exile after the assassination of his brother
<i>The Qualinesti</i>	Paul B. Thompson and Tonya R. Carter	Elven Nations Volume 3	Concluding volume in the elven epic. The founding of Qualinost and the society of renegade elves.
<i>Kindred Spirits</i>	Mark Anthony and Ellen Porath	Meetings Volume 1	First encounter between Flint Fireforge and Tanis Half-Elven in long-ago Silvanost.
<i>Wanderlust</i>	Mary Kirchoff and Steve Winter	Meetings Volume 2	Tasslehoff, Flint, and Tanis, together for the first time on the road to adventure. In Danish: <i>Kendar pa Vandring</i> .
<i>Dark Heart</i>	Tina Daniel	Meetings Volume 3	"The sword is truth." Kitiara uth Matar's youth and increasing fascination with evil.

1992

<i>The Oath and the Measure</i>	Michael Williams	Meetings Volume 4	Sturm Brightblade seeks to learn the secret fate of his long-lost father. In Italian: <i>Il Giuramento</i> .
<i>Steel and Stone</i>	Ellen Porath	Meetings Volume 5	The stormy friendship and love affair between Kitiara and Tanis.
<i>The Companions</i>	Tina Daniell	Meetings Volume 6	The first, heretofore-untold adventure of the Heroes of the Lance.
<i>The Reign of Istar</i>	Anthology	Tales II Volume 1	First of the second trilogy of collected short stories by TSR authors. Highlight: "The Silken Threads" by Weis and Hickman.
<i>The Cataclysm</i>	Anthology	Tales II Volume 2	Highlight: "The True Knight" by Weis and Hickman.
<i>The War of the Lance</i>	Anthology	Tales II Volume 3	Highlight: A story Tas vowed never, <i>ever</i> to tell, by Weis and Hickman.



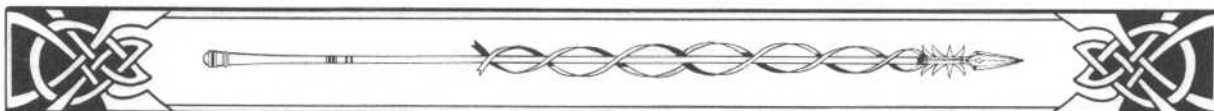


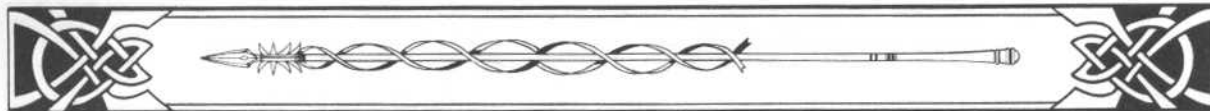
1993

<i>Covenant of the Forge</i>	Dan Parkinson	Dwarven Nations Volume 1	First epic chronicle of the ancient dwarven history.
<i>Hammer and Axe</i>	Dan Parkinson	Dwarven Nations Volume 2	Dan Parkinson is the author of more than two dozen award-winning novels.
<i>The Swordsheath Scroll</i>	Dan Parkinson	Dwarven Nations Volume 3	The Golden Age of Thorbardin.
<i>Before the Mask</i>	Michael and Teri Williams	Villains Volume 1	A child grows up to become evil cleric Verminaard, malevolent minion of Takhisis, the Dark Queen.
<i>The Black Wing</i>	Mary Kirchoff	Villains Volume 2	First DRAGONLANCE novel about a dragon: the black dragon Khisanth awakens from a centuries-long slumber.
<i>Emperor of Ansalon</i>	Douglas Niles	Villains Volume 3	Ariakas: warrior, priest, nobleman, king. The leader of the dark army.

1994

<i>Hederick, the Theocrat</i>	Ellen Dodge Severson	Villains Volume 4	The demagogue Hederick, leader of the Seeker religion in Solace.
<i>Lord Toede</i>	Jeff Grubb	Villains Volume 5	Toede is dead—until two fiends from the Abyss bring him back to life to settle a bet. Jeff Grubb's first solo novel.
<i>The Dark Queen</i>	Michael and Teri Williams	Villains Volume 6	The first novel about Takhisis, who never ceases her evil machinations.
<i>The Second Generation</i>	Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman	Hardcover Novel	Hardcover of collected novellas, some previously published, some new, hinting at the future of DRAGONLANCE. Reprinted in paperback in 1995.
<i>The Dragons of Krynn</i>	Anthology		New short stories by TSR authors featuring all manner and hue of dragons. Highlight: "The Best" by Margaret Weis.



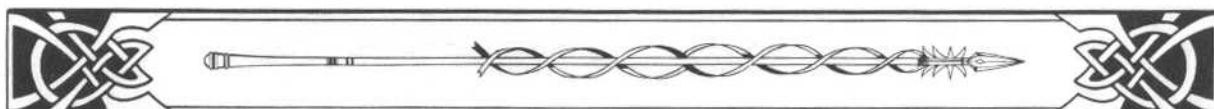


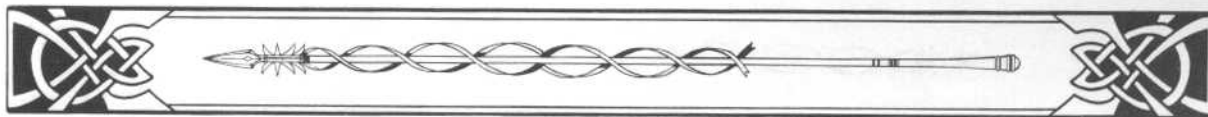
1994 Cont.

<i>Night of the Eye</i>	Mary Kirchoff	Defenders of Magic Volume 1	The history of the three orders of sorcery: Good, Neutral, and Evil.
<i>The Medusa Plague</i>	Mary Kirchoff	Defenders of Magic Volume 2	The powerful mages who defend and practice their Art after the Cataclysm.

1995

<i>The Seventh Sentinel</i>	Mary Kirchoff	Defenders of Magic Volume 3	Concluding volume in the Defenders of Magic series. Mary Kirchoff's seventh DRAGONLANCE novel to date.
<i>The Kagonesti</i>	Douglas Niles	Lost Histories Volume 1	Unofficial continuation of the Elven Nations series, featuring the history of the wild elves. Fourth DRAGONLANCE novel by Douglas Niles.
<i>The Irda</i>	Linda P. Baker	Lost Histories Volume 2	The legend of the lost race of beautiful ogres, their arrogance, and their tragedy.
<i>The Dargonesti</i>	Paul B. Thompson and Tonya Carter Cook	Lost Histories Volume 3	More Elven Nations history, this time focusing on the underwater civilization of the sea elves. Thompson and Carter's fifth DRAGONLANCE novel.
<i>Knights of the Crown</i>	Roland Green	Warriors Volume 1	First novel in the series chronicling great warriors of Krynn.
<i>Maquesta Kar-Thon</i>	Tina Daniell	Warriors Volume 2	Seafarer, warrior-woman, friend of the Heroes of the Lance.
<i>Knights of the Sword</i>	Roland Green	Warriors Volume 3	Chivalric knights fight to preserve their way of life and uphold their Order's beliefs.
<i>Dragons of Summer Flame</i>	Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman	Hardcover	Kitiara's son. Raistlin's return. The future of Krynn. The long-awaited return to DRAGONLANCE, in hardcover, from Weis and Hickman.





ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

MARK ANTHONY is the author of several TSR novels, including *Kindred Spirits* (with Ellen Porath), *Crypt of the Shadowking*, and *Tower of Doom*, and has contributed short stories to several TSR anthologies. His newest novel, *Curse of the Shadowmage*, will be published later this year. He was lucky to have the chance to serve as Astinus's assistant scribe during the study of the curious manuscript, "The Journal of Feldspar Oldstone," that appears in this volume.

LINDA P. BAKER, author of "Runes of the Ancient Ogre" is a resident of Mobile, Alabama. A research analyst at her day job, she is author of a short story in *The Dragons of Krynn* and of the forthcoming DRAGONLANCE® novel, *The Irda*.

CLYDE CALDWELL, **JEFF EASLEY**, **LARRY ELMORE**, and **KEITH PARKINSON** have been the principal artists for TSR, drawing and painting the Heroes of the Lance and the world of Krynn since the inception of the DRAGONLANCE Saga. Also included here are works by **STEPHEN FABIAN**, **DAN FRAZIER**, **DIANA MAGNUSON**, **ROBIN RAAB**, **VALERIE VALUSEK**, **KARL WALLER**, and **TOM YEATES**.

TODD FAHNESTOCK, author of the "Letters of Trayn Minaas," is a writer/dancer currently doing his best to quell his wanderlust long enough to graduate from Colorado College in Colorado Springs. His only other published work is the short story "Seekers" in DRAGONLANCE Tales II, Vol. 2, *The Cataclysm*.

JEFF GRUBB, a game designer and author, documented the first Gnome Inter-net for this volume. He is the author of *Lord Toede*, and wants everyone to know he's really, really, REALLY sorry about all the trouble with the gnomes. Really.

Writer of the music gathered under the pseudonym Jarrus Locastus and cowriter of the learned piece "Solamnic Heraldry," **NICOLE HARSCH** is best known to habitués of the GEN CON® Game Fair as the female swordfighter in the stage combat duo "Crossed Swords" and for playing Kitiara and/or Goldmoon in the Weis and Hickman Traveling Road Show. She lives in Atlanta, Georgia, where she is married to **MIKE SAKUTA**, a PH.D., Doctor of Chemistry, and her collaborator on heraldic history, who is half of the aforementioned swordfighting duo and also a player in the Road Show.

An editor in the book department at TSR, **MARLYS HEESZEL** has degrees in English and art. She put both skills to good use while compiling, designing, editing, and even illustrating her way through *The History of Dragonlance*.

HAROLD "Wisconsin" JOHNSON is creative game director for the DRAGONLANCE and RAVENLOFT® world product lines. He was instrumental in the creation of the DRAGONLANCE Saga but has been retired from the world of Krynn for some time. He was happy to return to the fold, researching and scribing the journals of Lord Gunthar, whose personality, he was happy to discover after all this time, contained echoes of his own sensibilities.

MARY KIRCHOFF, who chronicled the major holidays of Krynn, has written seven novels in the DRAGONLANCE world, including *Kendermore*, *Flint the King* (with Douglas Niles), *Wanderlust* (with Steve Winter), *The Black Wing*, and all three volumes in the Defenders of Magic series.

The rules for minotaur gladiatorial combat were compiled by none other than **RICHARD A. KNAAK**, a longtime contributor to the DRAGONLANCE series whose works, including the *New York Times* bestseller *The Legend of Huma*, have often featured minotaurs. He is currently at work on a new DRAGONLANCE novel further chronicling the race.

ADAM LESH, author of "The Obsidian Chest," is editor of *Apocrypha*, a World Wide Web-based RPG magazine. Adam is a longtime gamer and aspiring novelist. You can find him on the Internet at all hours.

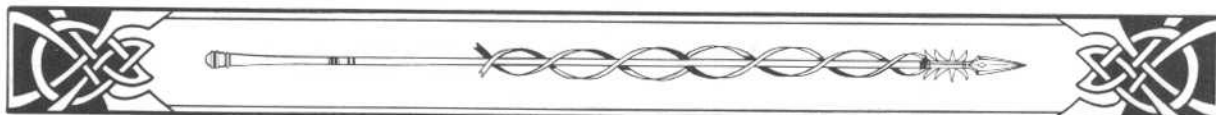
"A Meadmaker's Journal" was discovered by **JOHN MACKINNON**, a roving chemist and piper now living in Ottawa, Ontario. John also contributed the Elven haikus.

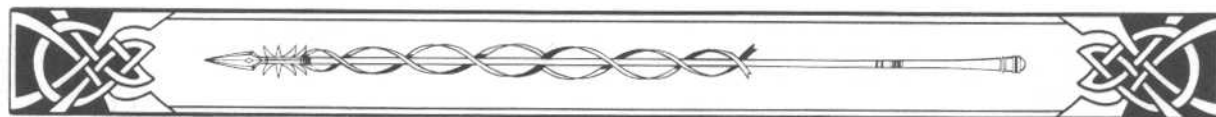
"The Vallenwoods" was contributed by **TERI McLAREN** (née Williams), coauthor of the short stories "Mark of the Flame, Mark of the Word" in *The Cataclysm*, and "The Final Touch" in *The Dragons of Krynn*, as well as two DRAGONLANCE novels, *Before the Mask* and *The Dark Queen*. For Wizards of the Coast's *Magic: The Gathering™, she has written *The Cursed Land* due out later in 1995.

ROGER E. MOORE, a creative director at TSR, supervises the creation and production of games. He has written a number of tales set in various AD&D® campaign worlds, but he finds that the tinker gnomes, kender, and gully dwarves of the DRAGONLANCE campaign are closest to his heart. He dedicates his tale of "A Wooden Quest" to the wonderful Gail Levine, even if she never puts down her Game Boy long enough to read it.

The novels of **DOUGLAS NILES** include the Moonshae, Maztica, and Druidhome trilogies for the FORGOTTEN

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REALMS® world and the bestselling *The Kinslayer Wars* and *Emperor of Ansalon* for the DRAGONLANCE saga. His first novel in the Watershed trilogy from Ace, *A Breach in the Watershed*, will be published in 1995. Meanwhile he is at work on a new hardcover for TSR, a coming-of-age quest called *Rod of Seven Parts* for 1996. He wrote about dragon aerial tactics for this volume, and also managed to track down and interview Flint Fireforge, with whom he has a long and intimate acquaintance, since he has often played Flint at gaming conventions.

KATE NOVAK-GRUBB's credits with TSR include short stories, game books, a comic book, and several novels coauthored with husband Jeff Grubb. Her passion for cooking and eating led to her role as compiler of Tika's cookbook. She appreciates generous assistance from Dennis Allen, Lizz Baldwin, Jeffrey Fuqua, Nicole Harsch, Adam Lesh, Rusty Lovaasen, Jeff Lynch, Janet Pack, Viola Pack, Gloria Pitts, Mike Sakuta, Burl Zorn, "and all those whose tasty recipes could not be included for lack of space."

NICK O'DONOHUE, a frequent writer for the DRAGONLANCE anthologies, is also the author of the critically-acclaimed Crossroads series from Berkeley Press, *The Magic and the Healing* (1994) and *Under the Healing Sign* (1995). He has made a sideline of writing about the brews and ales of Krynn. DO NOT, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES, ACCEPT MONEY FROM THIS MAN.

The human writer and bard **JANET PACK** assisted Mirrashar in the preparation of her music. Ms. Pack also contributed musical compositions to *Leaves from the Inn of the Last Home*, and wrote "Scourge of the Wicked Kendragon" in *The Dragons of Krynn* anthology. She is well known to GEN CON Game Fair goers for her portrayal of the kender Tasslehoff Burrfoot.

Author of upward of twenty-five novels, including bestsellers in four genres, **DAN PARKINSON** is known to TSR readers for *Starsong*, the DRAGONLANCE novel *Gates of Thorbardin*, and all three installments in the Dwarven Nations Trilogy. His short story contributions to TSR anthologies tend to spotlight gully dwarves—as in this volume's "The Lost Tapestry." At the moment Dan is hard at work on the first novel entirely devoted to that misbegotten, dirt-eatin' race.

DON PERRIN is a Canadian transplanted to Wisconsin. He is the designer of the **Star of the Guardian™* Collectible Trading Card Game. His first novel, coauthored with Margaret Weis, titled *Knights of the Black Earth: A MagForce 7 Novel*, will be published by Roc in April, 1995. For *The History of Dragonlance*, he researched and scribed Lord Ariakan's notes.

"Regional and Obscure Feastdays" by Ogden Shatterstone is actually the first published fiction of **CHRIS PIERSON**, who is a graduate journalism student at the University of Western Ontario.

"The Vallenwood Scrolls" were discovered by Calmas Dalanthi in the walking stick of a kender and are related here by **PATRICK L. PRICE**. He is currently a lecturer in Native American Studies at Cardinal Stritch College and at the Telesis Institute at Alverno College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In addition, he is a game designer for MagForce 7. For seven years, he was employed by TSR as fiction editor of *AMAZING®* Stories Magazine. For *Leaves from the Inn of the Last Home* he contributed rune readings, numerological charts, and herb lore.

Author, poet, and screenwriter **KEVIN STEIN** has written three novels for TSR, including *Brothers Majere*, set in the DRAGONLANCE world, and the short story "The Hunt" in *The Dragons of Krynn*.

After receiving her degree in journalism from Marquette University, **SUE WEINLEIN** concluded that fantasy worlds interested her much more than the real one. She began at TSR in the book department, and now edits role-playing games and collects dragons.

MARGARET WEIS and **TRACY HICKMAN** are the authors of the first two DRAGONLANCE trilogies, *Chronicles* and *Legends*, which have been in print continuously, in English-language editions, since 1985, and have been translated into twelve foreign languages. Their DRAGONLANCE books have sold upwards of twelve million copies worldwide. Weis and Hickman will team up again on a highly anticipated return to the world of Krynn in *Dragons of Summer Flame*, a new hardcover due from TSR later in 1995.

Quivalen Soth is the alter ego of **MICHAEL WILLIAMS**. Five of his novels—*Weasel's Luck*, *Galen Beknighted*, *The Oath and the Measure*, *Before the Mask*, and *The Dark Queen*—are set in the world of Krynn. He has contributed poetry and fiction to all of the DRAGONLANCE anthologies. His latest novel, *Arkady*, is due from Roc in 1996.

Special thanks to **LISA NEUBERGER** for her capable assistance; to the TSR staff for getting *The History of Dragonlance* to print on time; to all who volunteered ideas and contributions, and to all our friends on alt.fan.dragonlance. The Gnome Inter-net is dedicated to you!

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Catalogue of Reference

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